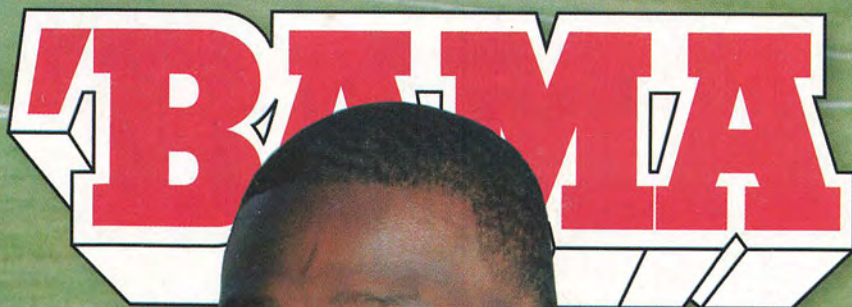


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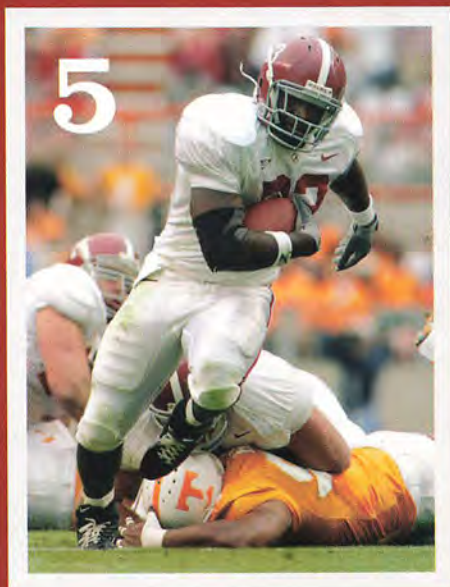
ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

2006 SEASON FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Location	Time
9/2/2006	Hawaii Rainbow Warriors	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
9/9/2006	Vanderbilt Commodores	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
9/16/2006	Louisiana-Monroe Indians	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
9/23/2006	at Arkansas Razorbacks	at Fayetteville, AR	TBA
9/30/2006	at Florida Gators	at Gainesville, FL	TBA
10/7/2006	Duke Blue Devils	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
10/14/2006	Ole Miss Rebels	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
10/21/2006	at Tennessee Volunteers	at Knoxville, TN	TBA
10/28/2006	Florida International Panthers	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
11/4/2006	Mississippi State Bulldogs	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
11/11/2006	at LSU Tigers	at Baton Rouge, LA	TBA
11/18/2006	Auburn Tigers	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA

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FABULOUS FULLBACKS

LéRon McClain and Tim Castille share stardom

Watching teams which regularly play on weekday nights, in made-for-television mid-level college football games, might give the impression that the traditional fullback is disappearing faster than the Larsen Ice Shelf in the Antarctic Peninsula.

And as our national story this month ("Vanishing Breed", Page 8) points out, the growing popularity of the spread offense reduced the position into an endangered species in many college football ecosystems. But Alabama's fullbacks, and others around the league, could borrow the famous line from Mark Twain, "Rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

That's not just the case for Bama fullbacks LéRon McClain and Tim Castille, but for other recognizable names at fullback in the Southeastern Conference, too. Joe Kines, Alabama's defensive coordinator, has to prepare for a big blocking back more times than not.

"We're still a power, kick-out league," Kines said. "Fullbacks are alive and well in the Southeastern Conference. In the folks we've got to beat the two-back deal is as prevalent as any."

Men like Jacob Hester at LSU, Jake Slaughter at Auburn and Arkansas' Peyton Hillis have survived the lean years for a position that never left the Southeastern Conference, and might just be making a comeback nationally.

What no one should doubt is the evolution of the position. Castille can line up as a fullback or halfback, and Hillis has displayed tremendous versatility, returning some punts for the Hogs and playing tailback.

"Everybody wants to play in the NFL, so when I first got here I was like, 'Crap man! Nobody in the

NFL uses a fullback anymore,'" Castille said. "As I actually watch games people still use fullbacks, and thankfully for me here, they use me in a versatile role so I'm doing third down things and short yardage things.

"Pittsburgh, Seattle, those guys use big backs when they get in short yardage things."

Even McClain, Alabama's more traditional fullback of the two seniors who've shared the spot for three years, is constantly moving in pre-snap motion and often coming out of the backfield on passing plays. They have all adapted to a new environment, but what hasn't killed off college

football's remaining fullbacks has only made them stronger. And there's no mistaking the position for something else in an offense like Alabama's.

"We run the ball in the SEC," Castille said. "We have to have our fullbacks in to make the thing go."

That means being the lead blocker out of the backfield on running plays - the definition of an old-school fullback. "We look at our fullback and tailback as a team," Castille said, "so this year our goal is to get Ken Darby to be the number one guy. We play a major part in the offense, it's just not as recognized."



Look Inside

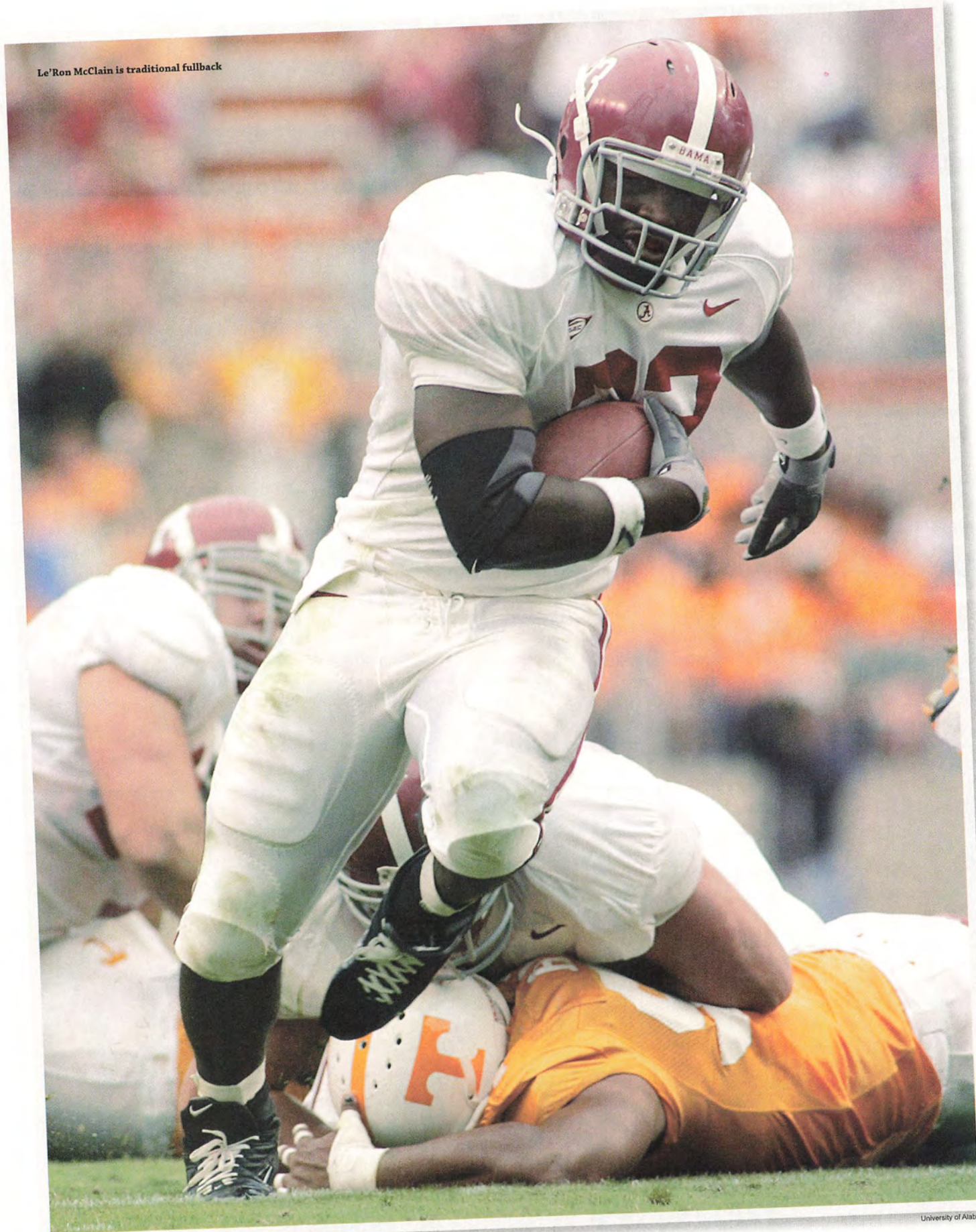
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Le'Ron McClain is traditional fullback



University of Alabama

Some suggest the trend away from that type of fullback will continue. For one thing, several high schools followed their pro and college counterparts, adopting spread passing formations to level the playing field against teams where they weren't physically comparable. But the cyclical nature of the football trends and formations might be rounding back toward the old school.

"I think it's making a comeback," Alabama Running Backs Coach Sparky Woods said of the position. "When we first came here we started looking at people to visit, and all of a sudden you see a lot more teams that have that guy that can do it.

"Especially if you move them around."

That is where the modern-day evolution comes into the position. Mike Shula does this very well. Bama's big backs can line up ahead of the tailback in the eye, or split to one side as a protector to the quarterback in shotgun situations. Often times the fullback motions to a wing to lead block for a running play, and at times that motion has continued to a split wide receiver look.

One probably can count the plays designed for the fullback in Alabama's offense on one hand, "but the ones we have we like to use a lot," Woods said. "If you play us you know you have to stop the tailback, so it helps to counter to the fullback whether you hand it to them or throw it to them. A lot of times they catch more passes than they get carries."

One of Castille's most memorable touches came his freshman year, out of a split backs formation against Tennessee when he took a handoff on a draw play into the end zone in the second over time. And Castille shows his versatility in short yardage situations, when he moves to tailback behind McClain.

"He's got a knack for the short yardage and goal line, of just finding a way to get the first down or the touchdown," Shula said. "He's real good in a one-on-one situation. You need that because a lot of times they're going to have an extra (defensive) guy in there and he's going to have to be his own blocker."

Where fullbacks are as endangered as California Condors is on any pre-season or post-season All-Star list. Because the fullback is usually not the man piling up statistical badges of honor, most All-Star teams pick two tailbacks for their two backfield spots, and the fullback gets left out.

"They don't look in depth to the fullback that much," McClain said, "but I'm making people pay attention a little bit. People see I take pride in blocking now. That's what I look for first."

Castille concurred, "Recognition's not a role you're going to get out of this position. I kind of



Tim Castille is versatile back

University of Alabama

feel sorry for LéRon because I get some carries. He might get one like every two games."

For Bama's guys, that was a bit of an adjustment from high school. Castille and McClain were feature backs then. McClain averaged about 20 carries per game in Tuscaloosa County's Wing-T offense, and Castille's high school career included over 8,000 all-purpose yards and more than 200 receptions. At Bama he was pushing 700 all-purpose yards, 115 carries and 45 receptions entering his senior year.

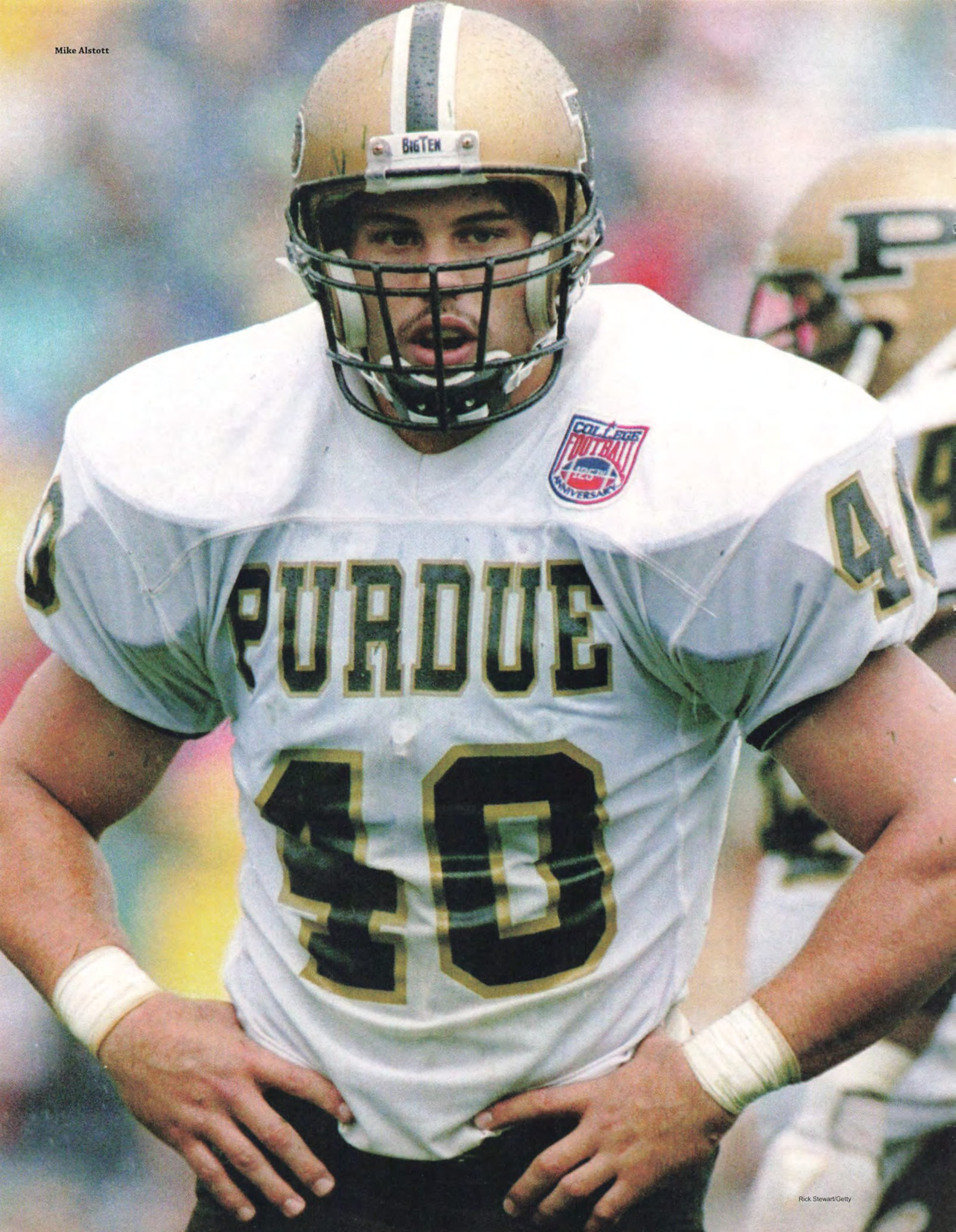
"Every play I get the ball here I'm trying to score a touchdown because they don't come as much as they did in high school," he said. "You have to fit into what's going to help us."

Castille doesn't score a touchdown every time

he carries the ball, but with 15 career touchdowns in 115 rush attempts, he's scored more times than Bama's other experienced running backs, Kenneth Darby (12) and Glen Coffee (1), combined. McClain has caught five touchdown passes (Castille has no TD receptions), and two rushing touchdowns in three years.

McClain jokingly hatched a plan in the fall to get more scores, but Castille apparently didn't go along.

"We were talking about the other day, we were going to change it up without Coach Shula knowing," McClain said, "and he block for me, but Coach Shula would probably throw us out of there."



VANISHING BREED

Sometimes, Henry Hynoski can't help but feel he was born too late.

When he watches his old NFL Films videos, the ones in which Jim Brown and Larry Csonka churn through helpless defenses in slow motion, Hynoski turns wistful, nostalgic for an era he never experienced first-hand. If it were up to him, the game would still be ruled by big men with bloody noses and clumps of turf stuck in their facemasks. "I'd just line up and take it right at 'em," he said. "Line up and say, 'Hey, here's what's coming, try to stop it.' That's the type of football I like to play."

A senior at Southern Columbia Area High in central Pennsylvania, Hynoski is a descendant of those old-school heroes. He's 235 pounds of muscle and backbone, a slightly bigger version of his father, Henry Hynoski Sr., who starred for Temple in the early 1970s and enjoyed a brief career with the Cleveland Browns.

A generation ago, the younger Hynoski could have gone to just about any major college and been a star. He could have followed Earl Campbell to Texas or Csonka to Syracuse and fit right in.

Not anymore. As he made the recruiting rounds earlier this year, the coaches with whom he spoke often left him feeling discouraged. "You'd probably be wasted in our offense," they would tell him.

The problem? Hynoski is a fullback. And not just any fullback, but a prototype fullback, a big guy who blocks, runs and swings out of the backfield to catch passes. Seems there's no place in football for guys like that anymore.

Or rather, there is a place, but it's smaller and less exalted than the pedestal such players once occupied. Most teams still list at least one or two fullbacks on the roster, but they're usually part-time players, not the tireless workaholics of yore. These days, fullbacks enter the game in specific down-and-distance situations and leave just as quickly. They're

Current college offenses have downgraded, and in many instances, eliminated the fullback position

role-players, survivors of a workforce purge that saw their jobs off-shored to other positions. Sometimes, they are deemed expendable altogether.

"A lot of colleges don't have a fullback in their offense," said longtime college and NFL coach Dick Vermeil. "A lot of colleges run the shotgun all day long. The position has been diminished by the design of the offense. There's been a movement of that type of physical person to a different position — linebacker or H-back."

The fullback position has been evolving for many years. The big, bruising players that Hynoski idolized growing up were among the last of their kind. They began to fade in the late 1970s when pro coaches such as Tampa Bay's John McKay and San Diego's Don Coryell began emphasizing speed over raw power at the skill positions. Those teams still ran out of the I-formation, but fullbacks weren't featured the way they had once been.

"They sort of became guards. It wasn't a ball-carrying position anymore," Vermeil said. "You had one gifted back, and you always felt that if you were not giving him the ball, then you were wasting a good run or the potential of a breakaway run."

After being stripped of their ball-carrying duties, fullbacks then found themselves falling out of favor as blockers. The West Coast mentality that

overtaken the NFL in the 1980s gradually filtered down to the college game. Multiple-set offenses superseded the I-formation and wishbone. As the game changed, so did the fullback position. Fullbacks received fewer carries and, as a result, fewer scholarships.

Even coaches who had relied heavily on the I-formation began de-emphasizing the fullback in their schemes. Former Notre Dame coach Bob Davie was part of that vanguard. He had initially hired as his offensive coordinator Jim Colletto, a former fullback who, while head coach at Purdue, had developed Mike Alstott into perhaps the most celebrated fullback of the 1990s.

At first, the Irish did exactly what everyone expected. They ran an offense in which the fullbacks played a prominent role. The coaches even turned one of their most heralded recruits, Mike McNair, into a fullback.

But after Colletto was replaced in 1999, the position began disappearing from Fighting Irish game plans. Davie was unapologetic. "I think it's the trend in college football right now," he said, and he was right. Fullbacks everywhere were vanishing.

The trend was partly a reaction to the rise of press defenses, which clogged up the line of scrimmage and forced offensive coordinators to augment their customary dives and traps with more pass plays. "Against eight-man fronts, it is just impossible to establish the fullback the way you used to," Davie lamented. "You just can't do it."

But it was also an acknowledgement that new offensive schemes were coming into vogue. The run-and-shoot, once derided as a gimmick, was suddenly the future of college football. Everybody had to have a spread-savvy coach to unclog the congestion at the line of scrimmage and give those speedy young athletes room to roam.

In 2003, Michigan State's David Herron found out just how quickly things were changing. A redshirt

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freshman, Herron had played fullback throughout his football career. He had been the lead blocker for Maurice Clarett at Warren G. Harding High in Ohio, helping the future Ohio State star rush for more than 2,000 yards as a senior.

But when spread-offense guru John L. Smith arrived from Louisville, Herron received an astonishing ultimatum. At his first team meeting, Smith asked players to stand and identify themselves by position. Herron stood up and told Smith he was a fullback. Smith shook his head.

"Fullbacks are out," he said. "Try another position."

Herron ended up moving to linebacker. He considered transferring, but decided to stay at Michigan State. Now a senior, he has become a fixture on defense. Herron was on the Nagurski Trophy watch list to start the season after making 22 starts the previous two years. To say he no longer thinks of himself as a fullback would be an understatement. "I don't like offensive guys now," he said. "And I hate fullbacks."

The problem aspiring fullbacks face is that few teams have the manpower to bludgeon opponents with the I-formation for an entire afternoon. As the strength gap has shrunk, many coaches have decided to attack defenses by sowing confusion. The best way to do that, they believe, is with the spread.

"It's easy to line up against two tight, two backs, that sort of thing," Smith said. "It's not easy to line up against trips and a back motioning out. That creates a lot of confusion for those guys over there. They have to be sound against this, this, this and this, because those are the looks they're going to see. It multiplies what those kids have to know and learn and be able to do."

Even diehard running teams like Wisconsin and Minnesota have acquiesced to a degree. The Badgers still have a jumbo-sized fullback in 273-pound junior Chris Pressley, but first-year coach Bret Bielema has promised a more diversified offense this fall.

At Minnesota, which has favored two-back sets under Glen Mason, traditional fullbacks have never been the rule. The two backs are complimentary running backs, often comparable in size and ball-carrying proficiency. "We have a fullback, but he's kind of a multipurpose guy," Mason said. "He can play tailback, or he can be in motion as an H-back, or he can play tight end. The teams that go out and recruit a guy purely to play the fullback position are few and far between."

Will fullbacks make a comeback? Some are doubtful. Football may be cyclical, with the tango of action and reaction often leading to the resurrection of seemingly outdated ideas. But the spread is more than a clever novelty; it's a revolution made possible by the dovetailing of many complimentary factors, from the increased specialization of high school athletes to the advent of digital video. As such, it's likely here to stay. It can't be un-invented. If anything, the spread will become even more sophisticated as



David Herron, converted fullback

Tom Pidgeon/Getty

"A lot of colleges don't have a fullback in their offense. A lot of colleges run the shotgun all day long. The position has been diminished by the design of the offense. There's been a movement of that type of physical person to a different position – linebacker or H-back."

***- Former NFL and college coach
Dick Vermeil***

prep quarterbacks are groomed more rigorously. Said Vermeil, "I think it's part of the direction of offenses. I can't see it going back."

But even if the spread is here to stay, it's unlikely the prototypical fullback will disappear entirely from the game. Purdue coach Joe Tiller recently said his approach to offense was to "throw it until we get hot, and once we get hot, throw it." But even Tiller has a true fullback on his roster. He's Frank Halliburton, a 6-3, 245-pound redshirt freshman. The Boilermakers signed Halliburton last year because Tiller believes the one-back offense has a profound flaw.

"It's not a complete answer to every situation on the field," he said. "I think when you get into short yardage and goal-line [situations], you had better have a

fullback on your roster who is a very capable guy. If you don't, you're probably going to come up short in that area. So although I see fewer fullbacks than I did in the past, I don't see an elimination of the position."

Some say fullbacks never really went out of style in the first place. The position, they contend, has simply evolved. Every team still has a big, burly guy whose job is to block and catch passes. Even Michigan State, which has embraced the spread with as much gusto as any team in the country, has such players. They're just incognito. Said Smith, "Our fullback is a tight end. We have to find a fullback at times, and that's our H-back."

Still, devotees of old-school college football long for the days when fullbacks didn't have to be disguised as tight ends and weren't relegated to situational roles.

Hynoski is one such devotee, and for good reason. With spread offenses proliferating, he has had to be cautious in choosing a college. He was still deliberating in early August, wary of choosing a school that wouldn't make full use of his talent or one that was in danger of changing coaches in the near future. At the top of his list were a handful of schools whose teams are known for their commitment to the running game – Iowa, Rutgers and Pitt.

Perhaps more than any school, Rutgers has made plain its devotion to traditional football values. School officials have even launched a publicity campaign on behalf of fullback Brian Leonard. The cover of Rutgers' media guide identifies the 6-2, 235-pound senior as a Heisman Trophy candidate, and Scarlet Knights sports information director John Wooding has hinted at more – notebooks, placards, maybe even billboards. All that's left is for Leonard to lead the Big East in all-purpose yards (he finished third last season), for Rutgers to win a spot in the Bowl Championship Series and for Heisman voters to repudiate a longstanding bias toward quarterbacks and tailbacks. That's a tall order, and Leonard knows it. "I don't think it's possible for a guy to win it with 700 yards rushing," he said, "but I do think it's more based on the media than anything else."

Leonard's Heisman Trophy chances would skyrocket if voters appreciated the difficulties modern-day fullbacks face. No longer able to work themselves into a groove, fullbacks must be ready to make an impact at a moment's notice. They must go from 0 to 60 in one play. That's not as easy as it sounds.

"I'm the kind of player who needs to be in the game," Hynoski said. "As the game goes on, I get stronger and stronger."

"It's frustrating to watch some of these teams now, because the fullback maybe goes in only fifteen percent of the time. When I was younger, my dad and I used to pull out old tapes of the NFL's all-time greats. Those were true fullbacks. Everybody seems to have gotten away from that, and I don't know why, because they're the players who made the position famous. I guess we're rare commodities now." ■

BAMA'S BEST EVER

A look at Tide fullbacks through the years

Alabama would never be known as Fullback U. Then again, what college football team would be?

For the past few decades it has been difficult for a fullback to make an all-star team. That's not because the fullback wasn't good enough. It was because most ballots included spots for "Running Back," and the glory goes to the statistics. The rushing statistical leader in almost every backfield is known as tailback or running back or, in Alabama's nomenclature, halfback.

About the only place a fullback could match the statistics of a tailback is as a touchdown scorer, as in a specialist like Tim Castille, or as a pass receiver. Castille had just one-tenth the rushing yardage of Kenneth Darby last year (Castille 124 yards on 45 carries, Darby 1,242 yards on 239 carries), but Castille had more than twice as many touchdowns (7-3). Darby had 29 pass receptions for 132 yards, while fullbacks LeRon McClain and Castille combined for 28 catches for 260 yards.

If you've got 'em, flaunt 'em, Crimson Tide Coach Mike Shula might say. Alabama sometimes uses two fullbacks at once (see Page 5).

But football is always evolving. Years ago one of the most important players was the quarterback, but far from today's quarterback his main job was blocker. In fact, some systems referred to this member of Notre Dame box and Single Wing formations as the blocking back. And the current evolution includes an offense without a fullback (see Page 8).

No one can say with certainty where the fullback may be in the future of Alabama's offense. But despite a paucity of all-star recognition, any student of Crimson Tide football would see that fullbacks have been high-caliber Bama football players.

Anyone who saw Alabama's 34-13 dismantling of Miami in the Sugar Bowl to win Bama's last

national championship in 1992 will think first of one of the most incredible plays in storied Crimson Tide history, George Teague's takeaway from a seemingly touchdown-bound Lamar Thomas. But deeper thought will remember the crunching blocks of fullback Martin Houston, paving the way for the likes of tailback Derrick Lassie. Houston had bare statistics of six carries for 23 yards, but he was a primary factor in Alabama controlling the clock and the ground game with 60 rushing plays for 267 yards. (Alabama had an incredible 36-24 advantage in time of possession.)

Just as Southern Cal's Matt Leinart was a different type of quarterback than Texas' Vince Young in last year's national championship game, there have been different styles of fullbacks in Alabama history. To take extremes would be the big blockers, like Houston, and the speedsters, like Calvin Culliver, who played in the mid-1970s.

In part, the style of the fullback has been dictated by the type of offense. In the Notre Dame Box, Alabama had some highly-regarded fullbacks who were mostly old-style, up-the-middle runners or blockers on the sweep when the left halfback/tailback was running. In the split backfield, a player like Ricky Moore could be used as much as the halfback. In the I formation he is almost exclusively a blocker.

It would take an old fan to remember some of Alabama's outstanding fullbacks, men like Tony Holm and Bubber Nesbitt. Johnny Cain is recognized by many fans, but not as much for his play as a fullback as for his extraordinary punting ability.

In the early 1950s, Alabama had one of the nation's finest backfields with Bobby Marlow at halfback and Tommy Lewis at fullback. Lewis is best-remembered for his unfortunate tackle-off-the-bench in the 1954 Cotton Bowl. Indeed, most

would remember Lewis as a tough-guy linebacker more than as a fullback. Lewis joked in the book, "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide," that he had played against Marlow in high school and one reason he wanted to go to Alabama was that Marlow was going to Bama, and Lewis didn't want to play against him again.

It was hard to tell much difference in the fullbacks and halfbacks in Alabama's offense of the 1960s. Steve Bowman was a typical fullback, a guy who could run like a tailback and was often a top rusher. He had two touchdown runs in Bama's 39-28 win over Nebraska in the 1966 Orange Bowl to give the Tide the 1965 national championship.

Alabama had great success in the 1970s running the wishbone offense. The wishbone was also known as the triple option, and the first option was the fullback. Those men said they got the hardest hits on the plays when they did not get the football, and when they did get the handoff they frequently were not hit at all at the line of scrimmage. That's because it was the job of the quarterback to "read" the defense. As the quarterback moved down the line with the ball stretched parallel to the line of scrimmage, the fullback angled to the outside of the offensive tackle. If the defensive end moved in to take the fullback, the quarterback withheld the ball and moved to the second option (the quarterback running) and possibly the third (a pitch to the halfback).

In some respects the wishbone fullback may have been under-appreciated because the big plays were more often turned in by the halfbacks. That was also an offense in which play action passes were very effective, with the fake to the fullback. There was little pass-blocking in the triple-option days. Every play looked like a run and the defense was usually back on its heels, not making any pretense

of a pass rush. That's one reason passing efficiency was quite high in the Alabama wishbone.

Steve Bisceglia and Ellis Beck were the first wishbone fullbacks. Alabama was feeling its way in the new offense and both were selected more for their blocking ability than running ability, but both had moments with the football. Bisceglia had a big run to get the Crimson Tide offense untracked in a near-miracle come-from-behind 17-10 win over Tennessee in Knoxville in 1972.

Culliver introduced the element of speed to the fullback position.

And in 1974 Bama added a freshman fullback who would blossom into perhaps Alabama's best-ever at the position. Johnny Davis was the blend of size, speed and power that made him one of Bama's finest players when the Crimson Tide was dominating the Southeastern Conference and most of the rest of the nation.

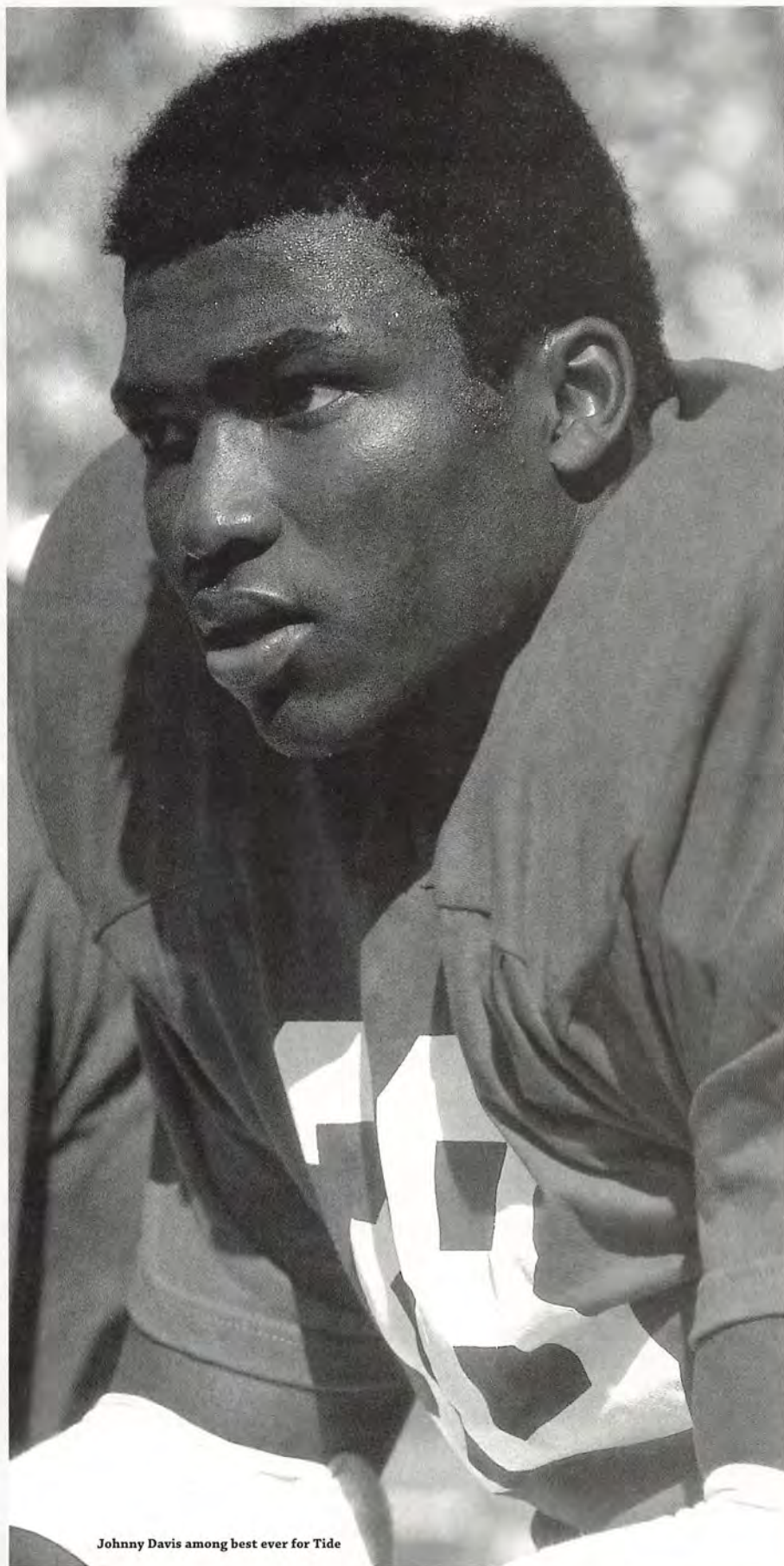
Davis was almost unstoppable. In his four years he had only two plays in which he was stopped for lost yardage. Ironically, they came almost back-to-back against Vanderbilt, of all teams. One of his most memorable runs was a 12-yard touchdown that looked like a rugby scrum, a pile of men moving inexorably forward until the goal was achieved. But in this pile, there was only one Alabama jersey, the other half dozen or so belonging to frustrated Auburn defenders, who couldn't bring Davis down. After the game Davis suggested, "I should have charged them for the ride."

Billy Jackson seemed a little undersized at fullback, but tell it to Nebraska. In Alabama's 1978 national championship season, the Tide opened the season against the Cornhuskers at Birmingham's Legion Field. When the game was still in doubt, Nebraska turned the ball over to Alabama inside the one-foot line. Bama's first job was to get out of that hole. What Alabama did was give the ball to Billy Jackson, over and over and over. And the Tide went over 99-yards for a touchdown, a confidence-builder for Bama, depressing to Nebraska, and the Tide earned a 20-3 win.

A more typical fullback did much of the damage in Alabama's national championship run the next year. The 1979 Tide met Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl and finished an undefeated season with a 24-9 win. Steve Whitman had a 12-yard touchdown run to cap a 98-yard drive that ended scoring in the game.

One oddity of the position is that Ricky Moore was Alabama's leading rusher in 1980, 1981 and 1982 as a fullback in the wishbone of Coach Paul Bryant. But in his senior year, in a split backfield under Coach Ray Perkins, his production dropped off.

It would take an astute Alabama fan to even remember the last Alabama fullback drafted by the NFL. It was Bo Wright in 1988. ■



Johnny Davis among best ever for Tide

University of Alabama



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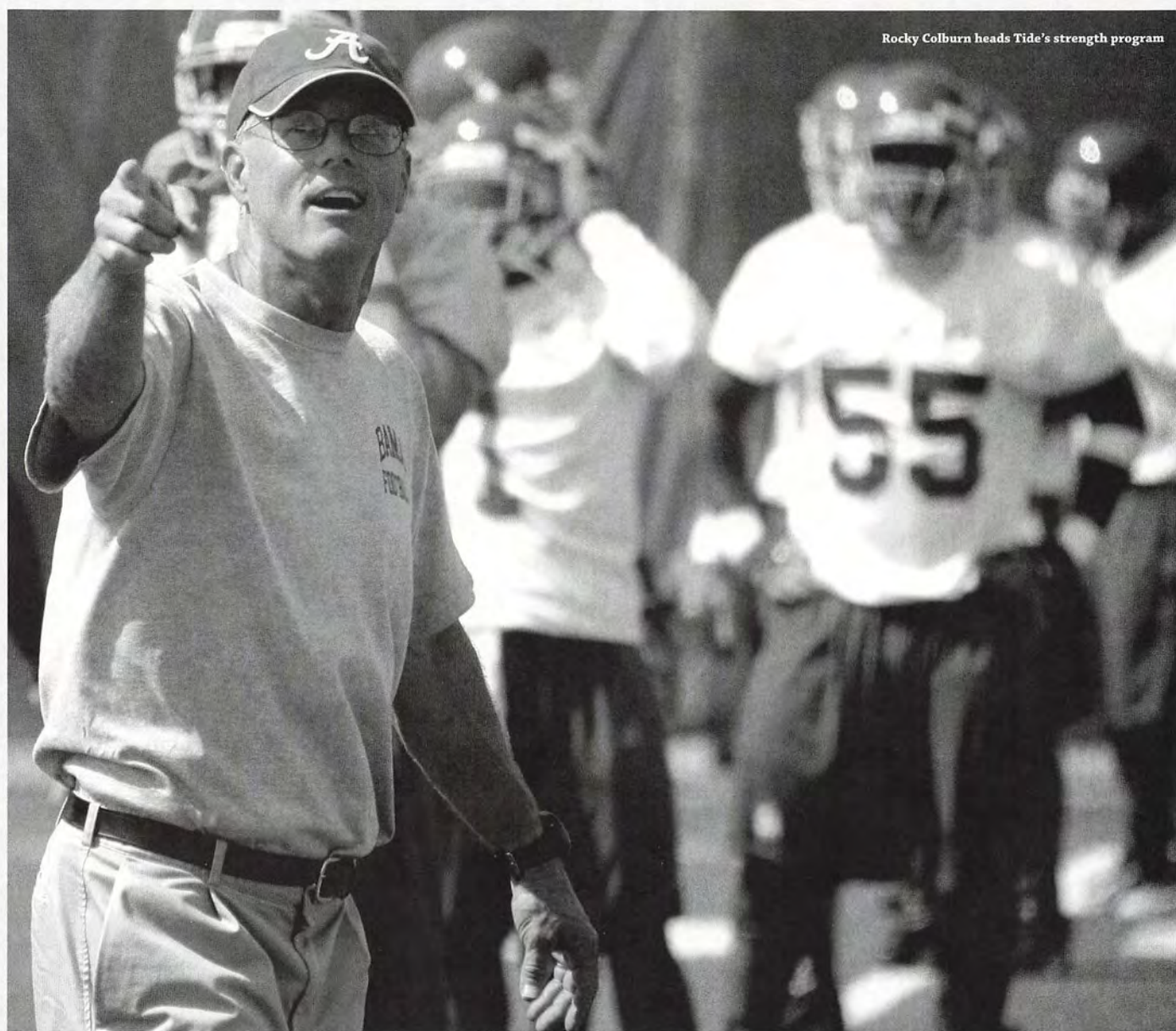
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STAFF BY THOMAS MURPHY

ROCKY

Strength coach has national championship goal



Rocky Colburn heads Tide's strength program

University of Alabama

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE

GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS

Alabama football means championships and All-Americans and, for many, memories of a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 former Alabama players who per-

formed in Crimson and White over a 75-year period tell us WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE, and many remember Paul "Bear" Bryant. His time as a Bama player, assistant coach, and 25 years as head coach is a major part of Alabama football, but not the only great era. There have also been national championships won under Wallace Wade and Frank Thomas and Gene Stallings. And part of WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE is former Alabama players' expectations of more national titles.

The last coach to lead Alabama to the national championship is Gene Stallings, who played and coached for Coach Bryant before becoming a Hall

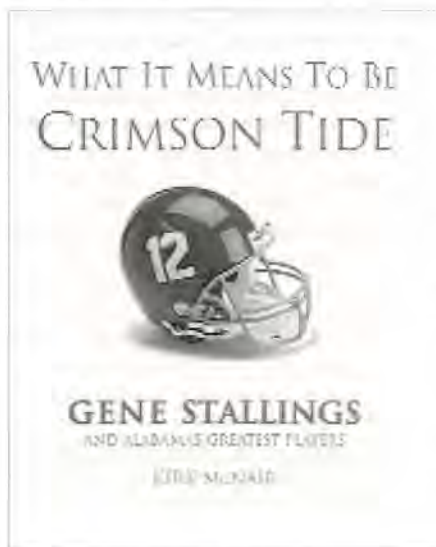
of Fame caliber coach himself.

Not only have the coaches been legendary but that stellar tradition has spawned players enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL's Pro Football Hall of Fame. Now, Gene Stallings and 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair have collaborated to bring together many of the greatest players ever to wear the Crimson and White to share their memories in WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE-GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS.

Among those sharing their memories are: from the '40s and '50s, Harry Gilmer and Bart Starr; from the '60s and '70s, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ray Perkins, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, and Ozzie Newsome; from the '80s and '90s, Mike Shula and Jay Barker. And many more, including those from the new millennium.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and also tells the story of how he did not become Alabama's head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE-GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS is now available. The hardcover book is more than 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To order your copy (\$27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.



Rocky Colburn's focus as Alabama's new strength and conditioning coach is so streamlined, so tailored to one end, it can be summed up in three simple words: Win National Championships.

It makes his job simpler to push that solitary point. All else derives from that objective, with every straining lift, every 40-yard sprint, every gasser meant to contribute to the collective goal.

The bespectacled Colburn essentially takes over the Crimson Tide football team in mid-January and pushes, pulls and exhorts and grinds on them until handing over the reins to Head Coach Mike Shula and his staff on reporting day in August.

The term "national championship" issues from his lips over and over and over again during that six-month period.

"He's the type of guy who keeps his mind one way; he's focused on one thing, to get us a national championship," said sophomore guard B.J. Stabler.

"You should have gone some place else if you don't want to win a national championship," Colburn said after the Crimson Tide's second workout of fall camp. "That's why you come to Alabama. I told them before, and I'm not going to let them forget it. Every day, that's why you're here."

A native of Cantonment, Florida, Colburn had a nice gig going as assistant strength and conditioning coach with the Atlanta Falcons under former Crimson Tide Assistant Al Miller when Kent Johnston elected to depart the Alabama staff to pursue private business back home in Crawford, Texas.

Fourth-year Alabama Coach Shula, whose

playing career at The Capstone began just after Colburn's ended, knew just the man he wanted to hire to fill Johnston's role.

"I feel blessed by the good Lord He brought me back," Colburn said. "I thank Him and Coach Shula for giving me the opportunity to return.

"It's gone well so far, but we haven't won one game yet. When we start winning some games, it'll start getting better."

Colburn's football philosophies were shaped as a defensive back at Alabama in the early 1980s. He was signed by the Paul "Bear" Bryant staff and earned academic All-SEC honors under that staff in 1981 and '82. He did the same a year later during the first year of the Ray Perkins regime. Colburn was assistant strength and conditioning coach for the Crimson Tide from 1987-92.

"He's one of the tough ones," Alabama senior linebacker Terrence Jones said. "I think he played for Coach Bryant. He brings a lot to us from what he went through as a player."

Jones is one of the many Alabama players who touted Colburn's offseason workouts as a huge contribution to the physical fitness of the team.

"He's a heck of a guy in every aspect," said sophomore center Antoine Caldwell. "He's a hard

worker, but after that he loves on you. He takes care of you, stretches you out.

"He's always doing something to kind of push us over the edge, but after it's over with, he picks you back up. He's everything that we need out of this program. He's a big key to how well our summer went."

Colburn's stance on offseason workouts revolves around the philosophy that unless you push to the limits, and sometimes beyond, then you haven't gained much.

"You've got to make them run farther and harder and faster and make them lift more more often than they've ever done if you want them to get better," Colburn said.

More than one returning Alabama player used the single-word definition "grueling" to describe Colburn's summertime conditioning plan.

"We've got to do things we've never done before if we want to be a national champion," Colburn said. "If we want to be a repeat national champion or a repeat SEC champion, we've got to do things that we've never done before.

"It's really not necessarily what we do physically, but mentally is what we've got to get accomplished as far as being able to do more and

more and push a little further."

Shula, who by NCAA rules cannot observe offseason workouts, obviously sounded out key players to check on the progress of the summer work.

"Just talking to a couple of our players, he got all of our guys on edge a little bit," Shula said. "I kind of like that as a head coach. I think he's done a tremendous job since he's been here.

"He's been very serious with his approach. Listening to the players talk about it and talk about our offseason program, they feel as good as they've ever felt. We had a real good (strength and conditioning) coach with Kent last year and I think Rocky might have picked up where Kent left off."

One player in particular credits Colburn with having him in the best shape of his career. Senior defensive tackle Jeremy Clark entered camp looking large and in charge at 6-3, 308 pounds. Clark has gained more than 35 pounds since entering school with a freshman weight around 270.

He doesn't look puffy these days. He looks rock solid.

"I feel stronger than I've ever been since I've been here," Clark said, "and that's a credit to Coach Colburn.

"He's tough like every (strength and conditioning) coach is. Coach Colburn is tough, but he's a man that you won't forget. He's straightforward, tells you what you need to know, not just what you want to hear. He's a fun guy to be around."

Colburn doesn't withdraw into his office in the spacious, state-of-the-art new weightroom when camp opens. In fact, far from it.

He's a constant presence around practice and a keen observer of his players' conditioning needs.

"Everybody's got to lift, and we've got to keep up our strength," Colburn said. "As time goes on, the younger guys who aren't playing a lot, we'll try to help them gain weight or lose weight or get stronger and increase in whatever capacities they need to increase in."

The subject he'll harp on with the younger players, as he did with the veterans throughout summer is easy to guess: Win National Championships.

"That's every day," Stabler said. "He's all out, wants to do every rep at 100 per cent. He doesn't smile much, but it lights up the weight room when he does smile." ■

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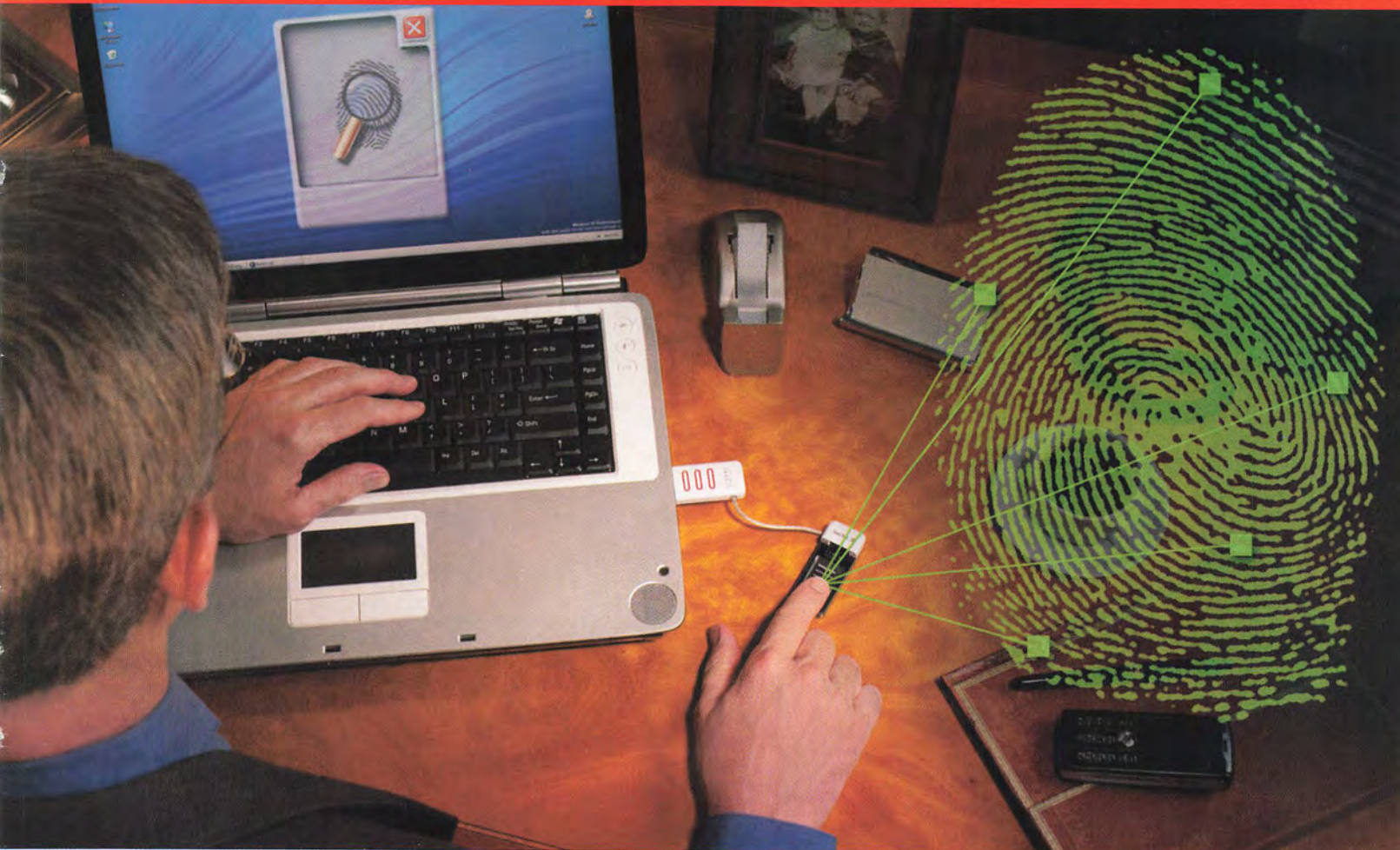
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2006 ALABAMA FOOTBALL REPORTING ROSTER

No	NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN							
1	Ramzee Robinson, LCB	SR	5-10	196	3L	Huntsville	47	Zeke Knight, RDE	JR	6-4	230	2L	Wedowee
2	Simeon Castille, RCB	JR	6-1	189	2L	Birmingham	48	Travis Sikes, LB	FR	6-3	195	HS	Nashville, Tenn.
3	Jeffrey Dukes, S	SR	6-2	199	2L	Oxford, Miss.	49	Rashad Johnson, SS	SO	6-0	186	1L	Sulligent
4	*Tyrone Prothro, FL	SR	5-8	178	3L	Heflin	50	Justin Britt, RG	JR	6-4	290	2L	Cullman
5	Roy Upchurch, HB	FR	6-0	191	RS	Tallahassee, Fla.	53	Ken Vandervoort, MLB	JR	6-3	221	SQ	Anniston
6	Marcel Stamps, WLB	JR	6-2	199	2L	Brantley	55	Terrence Jones, SLB	SR	6-0	226	3L	Fosters
7	Will Oakley, FL	SO	6-1	192	SQ	Ponte Vedra Bch, Fla.	56	Matt Collins, MLB	JR	6-1	245	2L	Clay
8	Chris Rogers, RCB	FR	5-11	190	RS	Lakeland, Fla.	57	Darren Mustin, MLB	JR	6-3	237	Tr	Brentwood, Tenn.
9	Terry Grant, HB	FR	5-9	184	HS	Lumberton, Miss.	57	Morgan Garner, C	SO	6-2	258	Sq	Deatsville
9	Nikita Stover, FL	SO	6-0	204	Tr	Hartselle	58	Kyle Tatum, RT	SR	6-7	311	3L	Prattville
10	Jimmy Johns, HB	SO	6-2	227	1L	Brookhaven, Miss.	59	Antoine Caldwell, C	SO	6-4	288	1L	Montgomery
11	Matt Caddell, WR	JR	5-11	189	2L	McCalla	60	Scott Deaton, RG	FR	6-5	281	RS	Birmingham
11	P.J. Fitzgerald, P	FR	5-11	188	RS	Coral Springs, Fla.	61	B.J. Stabler, RG/LG	SO	6-4	307	1L	Grove Hill
13	Cory Reamer, SS	SO	6-4	210	Sq	Hoover	62	Alex Stadler, RG	FR	6-5	318	HS	Bealeton, Va.
14	John Parker Wilson, QB	SO	6-2	209	Sq	Hoover	63	Justin Johnson, RDT	JR	6-3	276	SQ	Northport
15	Jimmy Barnes, QB	FR	6-5	239	RS	Los Alamitos, Calif.	66	Brian Motley, C	FR	6-1	284	HS	Autaugaville
15	Andrew Friedman, PK	FR	6-1	202	RS	Fairhope	66	Brian Selman, SN	FR	6-0	210	RS	Vestavia Hills
16	Lionel Mitchell, RCB	SO	6-2	184	Sq	Stone Mtn, Ga.	67	J.P. Adams, LDT	SR	6-3	298	1L	Northport
17	Greg McElroy, QB	FR	6-2	216	HS	Southlake, Texas	68	Taylor Pharr, RT	FR	6-5	265	HS	Irondale
18	Marc Guillon, QB	SR	6-4	200	1L	Chico, Calif.	69	Luke Spaulding, SN	SR	6-0	217	SQ	Mobile
19	Tim Castille, FB	SR	5-11	234	3L	Birmingham	70	Evan Cardwell, C	FR	6-2	291	RS	Killen
20	Marcus Carter, SS	JR	6-0	200	2L	Fort Payne	71	Andre Smith, LT	FR	6-4	348	HS	Birmingham
21	Prince Hall, MLB	FR	5-11	255	RS	Moreno Valley, Calif.	72	Chris Capps, LT	JR	6-7	283	2L	Jonesboro, Ga.
22	DJ Hall, FL	JR	6-3	186	2L	Ft Walton Bch, Fla.	73	Justin Moon, LG	JR	6-5	287	1L	Guntersville
23	Tremayne Cogger, DB	FR	5-10	174	HS	Columbia, Tenn.	74	David Ross, OL	FR	6-2	307	HS	Homewood
24	Marquis Johnson, DB	FR	5-11	178	HS	Sarasota, Fla.	75	Cody Davis, LT	SO	6-6	282	1L	Tuscaloosa
25	Aaron McDaniel, WR	SO	6-0	188	SQ	Fort Payne	76	Marlon Davis, LG/RG	SO	6-2	311	1L	Columbus, Ga.
26	Ali Sharief, HB	FR	5-9	212	RS	Stevenson	77	Byron Walton, RDT	FR	6-3	306	RS	Trinity
27	Justin Woodall, SS	FR	6-1	213	HS	Oxford, Miss.	78	Mike Johnson, LT	FR	6-6	303	RS	Pensacola, Fla.
28	Javier Arenas, RCB	FR	5-8	176	HS	Tampa, Fla.	79	Drew Davis, RT	FR	6-6	268	RS	Evergreen
29	Adam Hill, P	FR	6-2	195	HS	Douglasville, Ga.	80	Mike McCoy, WR	FR	6-2	217	HS	Rankin, Miss.
30	Patrick Hanrahan, FB	FR	6-0	245	HS	Springville	81	Keith Brown, SE	JR	6-3	204	2L	Pensacola, Fla.
30	Bryan Kilpatrick, SS	SR	6-4	198	SQ	Monroeville	82	Earl Alexander, WR	FR	6-4	201	HS	Phenix City
31	Forress Rayford, LCB	SR	5-11	174	SQ	Mobile	83	Travis McCall, TE	SO	6-2	264	1L	Prattville
31	Leigh Tiffin, PK	FR	5-10	170	HS	Red Bay	84	Jake Jones, WR	FR	6-0	177	HS	Birmingham
32	Eryk Anders, SLB	FR	6-2	221	RS	San Antonio, Texas	85	Preston Dial, TE	FR	6-2	240	HS	Mobile
33	LeRon McClain, FB	Sr	6-1	257	3L	Northport	85	Danny Barger, FL	SR	5-11	182	SQ	Tuscaloosa
34	Kenneth Darby, HB	SR	5-11	215	3L	Huntsville	86	Jamie Christensen, PK	JR	6-0	183	2L	Norcross, Ga.
35	Charlie Kirschman, LB	FR	6-2	225	HS	St. Augustine, Fla.	87	Cole Harvey, TE	FR	6-2	230	HS	Tallahassee, Fla.
36	Eric Gray, RCB	JR	6-2	188	2L	Trinity	88	Nick Walker, TE	SO	6-5	270	1L	Brundidge
37	Heath Thomas, P	FR	6-3	202	HS	Montgomery	89	Charles Hoke, TE	SO	6-7	251	Sq	Birmingham
37	Trent Dean, DB	SO	5-11	188	Sq	Decatur	90	Milton Talbert, DE	FR	6-2	233	HS	Hattiesburg, Miss.
38	Glen Coffee, HB	SO	6-2	225	1L	Ft. Walton Bch, Fla.	91	Chris Harris, LDE	SR	6-5	254	2L	Tuscaloosa
39	Darwin Salaam, WR	SO	6-3	187	Sq	Madison	91	Will Denniston, FB	JR	6-3	216	SQ	Mobile
40	Baron Huber, FB	FR	6-4	252	RS	Knoxville, Tenn.	92	Wallace Gilberry, LDE	JR	6-4	264	2L	Bay Minette
41	Andy Davis, DB	FR	6-0	196	HS	Moody	92	Stabler Gray, TE	SO	6-7	245	HS	Tuscaloosa
42	Juwan Simpson, WLB	SR	6-3	226	3L	Decatur	93	Bobby Greenwood, RDE	SO	6-5	260	1L	Prattville
43	Sam Burnthall, S	FR	6-2	184	HS	Decatur	94	Keith Saunders, RDE	JR	6-3	253	1L	Willingboro, N.J.
44	Demarcus Waldrop, WLB	JR	5-11	200	2L	Pinson	95	Brandon Deaderick, LDE	FR	6-4	271	RS	Elizabethton, Ky.
45	Charlie Higgenbotham, LB	FR	5-11	225	HS	Birmingham	96	Dominic Lee, RDT	SR	6-2	283	3L	Birmingham
45	Reyn Willis, TE	FR	6-4	212	RS	Raleigh, N.C.	97	Lorenzo Washington, DT	FR	6-4	269	RS	Loganville, Ga.
46	Zach Schreiber, SLB	FR	6-1	211	RS	Shreveport, La.	98	Brandon Fanney, DT	FR	6-5	253	RS	Morristown, Tenn.
No	NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN	99	Jeremy Clark, LDT	SR	6-3	306	3L	Daphne
							* Injured and not participating						

* Injured and not participating

2006 SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE FOOTBALL SCHEDULES

ALABAMA

Sept. 2 Hawaii
Sept. 9 Vanderbilt
Sept. 16 Louisiana-Monroe
Sept. 23 @ Arkansas
Sept. 30 @ Florida
Oct. 7 Duke
Oct. 14 Ole Miss
Oct. 21 @ Tennessee
Oct. 28 Florida International
Nov. 4 Mississippi State
Nov. 11 @ LSU
Nov. 18 Auburn

FLORIDA

Sept. 2 Southern Miss
Sept. 9 Central Florida
Sept. 16 @ Tennessee
Sept. 23 Kentucky
Sept. 30 ALABAMA
Oct. 7 LSU
Oct. 14 @ Auburn
Oct. 28 Georgia @ Jax
Nov. 4 @ Vanderbilt
Nov. 11 South Carolina
Nov. 18 Western Carolina
Nov. 25 @ FSU

LSU

Sept. 2 Louisiana-Lafayette
Sept. 9 Arizona
Sept. 16 @ Auburn
Sept. 23 Tulane
Sept. 30 Mississippi State
Oct. 7 @ Florida
Oct. 14 Kentucky
Oct. 21 Fresno State
Nov. 4 @ Tennessee
Nov. 11 ALABAMA
Nov. 18 Ole Miss
Nov. 25 Arkansas @ Little Rock

SOUTH CAROLINA

Aug. 31 @ Mississippi State
Sept. 9 Georgia
Sept. 16 Wofford
Sept. 23 Florida Atlantic
Sept. 28 Auburn
Oct. 7 @ Kentucky
Oct. 21 @ Vanderbilt
Oct. 28 Tennessee
Nov. 4 Arkansas
Nov. 11 @ Florida
Nov. 18 Middle Tennessee
Nov. 25 @ Clemson

ARKANSAS

Sept. 2 Southern Cal
Sept. 9 Utah State
Sept. 16 @ Vanderbilt
Sept. 23 ALABAMA
Oct. 7 @ Auburn
Oct. 14 SE Missouri State
Oct. 21 Ole Miss
Oct. 28 La-Monroe @ Little Rock
Nov. 4 @ South Carolina
Nov. 11 Tennessee
Nov. 18 @ Mississippi State
Nov. 21 LSU @ Little Rock

GEORGIA

Sept. 2 Western Kentucky
Sept. 9 @ South Carolina
Sept. 16 UAB
Sept. 23 Colorado
Sept. 30 @ Ole Miss
Oct. 7 Tennessee
Oct. 14 Vanderbilt
Oct. 21 Mississippi State
Oct. 28 Florida @ Jax
Nov. 4 @ Kentucky
Nov. 11 @ Auburn
Nov. 25 Georgia Tech

OLE MISS

Sept. 3 Memphis
Sept. 9 @ Missouri
Sept. 16 @ Kentucky
Sept. 23 Wake Forest
Sept. 30 Georgia
Oct. 7 Vanderbilt
Oct. 14 @ ALABAMA
Oct. 21 @ Arkansas
Oct. 28 Auburn
Nov. 4 Northwestern State
Nov. 18 LSU
Nov. 25 @ Mississippi State

TENNESSEE

Sept. 2 California
Sept. 9 Air Force
Sept. 16 Florida
Sept. 23 Marshall
Sept. 30 @ Memphis
Oct. 7 @ Georgia
Oct. 21 ALABAMA
Oct. 28 @ South Carolina
Nov. 4 LSU
Nov. 11 @ Arkansas
Nov. 18 @ Vanderbilt
Nov. 25 Kentucky

AUBURN

Sept. 2 Washington State
Sept. 9 @ Mississippi State
Sept. 16 LSU
Sept. 23 Buffalo
Sept. 28 @ South Carolina
Oct. 7 Arkansas
Oct. 14 Florida
Oct. 21 Tulane
Oct. 28 @ Ole Miss
Nov. 4 Arkansas State
Nov. 11 Georgia
Nov. 18 @ ALABAMA

KENTUCKY

Sept. 3 @ Louisville
Sept. 9 Texas State
Sept. 16 Ole Miss
Sept. 23 @ Florida
Sept. 30 Central Michigan
Oct. 7 South Carolina
Oct. 14 @ LSU
Oct. 28 @ Mississippi State
Nov. 4 Georgia
Nov. 11 Vanderbilt
Nov. 18 Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 25 @ Tennessee

MISSISSIPPI STATE

Aug. 31 South Carolina
Sept. 9 Auburn
Sept. 16 Tulane
Sept. 23 @ UAB
Sept. 30 @ LSU
Oct. 7 West Virginia
Oct. 14 Jacksonville State
Oct. 21 @ Georgia
Oct. 28 Kentucky
Nov. 4 @ ALABAMA
Nov. 18 Arkansas
Nov. 25 @ Ole Miss

VANDERBILT

Sept. 2 @ Michigan
Sept. 9 @ ALABAMA
Sept. 16 Arkansas
Sept. 23 Tennessee State
Sept. 30 Temple
Oct. 7 @ Ole Miss
Oct. 14 # Georgia
Oct. 21 South Carolina
Oct. 28 @ Duke
Nov. 4 Florida
Nov. 11 @ Kentucky
Nov. 18 Tennessee

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SPRING IN FALL

Autumn is important time for spring sports

It might be the off-season for spring sports, but what they're doing now counts, too. The falling leaves of autumn don't mean baseball, softball, golf and tennis at The University of Alabama are dormant. The fall is an important time for preparing for the traditional season. In some cases, this consists of more than just pre-season training, as Alabama's men's golf team and the Crimson Tide men's and women's tennis teams all host nationally prominent fall events.

Here's a look at how Crimson Tide spring teams are using the fall:

BASEBALL

Coach Jim Wells will divide the baseball season into two official segments. For the fall, there will be three to four weeks designated for official team practice, which will include intrasquad scrimmages at Sewell-Thomas Stadium and team practice sessions.

More importantly, however, Wells and his staff can conduct individual workouts with the players all throughout the fall. The NCAA has strict limits on what can and can't be done in the individual work. Eight hours per week are allowed, but only two of those can be "baseball skill" workouts. There's a 56 game limit for baseball, and all of those games will be during the spring semester beginning in early February.

Two years ago the baseball team hosted a group of the nation's best junior college teams for a fall tournament, but that was because a four game regular season trip to Hawaii the following February did not count against the number of games allowed due to special exceptions the NCAA grants to teams playing in Hawaii.

After this academic year the NCAA baseball rules are changing to give cold-weather teams a better shot, and no one will be allowed to start practice for the regular season before February 1, and regular season games will not be permitted to start before late February, 2008.

SOFTBALL

Coach Patrick Murphy will practice his squad just 15 times in the fall, but there will be two different opportunities to see his squad in competitive game action during the fall. Fall practice for the softball team was to start on September 26th, a Tuesday,



Tommy Hunter leads Bama baseball

University of Alabama

and conclude on October 14. That's a relatively short fall for Murphy.

"We're only going for 15 days in the fall, because we will have just two true freshmen and a sophomore transfer," he said. "This year we will spend more time in spring before starting the season."

The softball team will play round-robin style with four Alabama community colleges. Shelton State, Wallace-Dothan, Wallace-Hanceville and Jeff State will play the Crimson Tide in Tuscaloosa. The games are scheduled for Sunday, October 8, and the next Saturday on October 14 - the day of the Alabama-Ole Miss football game. The first weekend's games will be played at noon, 2 p.m.

and 4 p.m., and the second weekend of play, which wraps up the softball team's fall, will be scheduled around the football game.

The softball team will have another big day in the fall on September 16, when the team will pick up its 2006 Southeastern Conference Championship rings at the Tide's football game against Louisiana-Monroe.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Tennis is truly a year-round sport, and fall tournament competition is important for establishing a starting point for the computerized rankings used to rate teams and individuals in the more competitive spring team dual match season.

Alabama's women's tennis team was to open the fall campaign at home with the annual Roberta Alison Classic on September 22-24. The Roberta Alison is one of the most prominent tournaments in the fall, as teams from all over the Southeast will send individuals to compete in the flighted event.

The Roberta Alison Classic is named after the former University of Alabama tennis player who made history as the first female varsity athlete at The University. She played on the men's team from 1963-65.

The Alabama women will host a second huge event in Tuscaloosa this fall as well. The Intercollegiate Tennis Association South Regional will be held in Tuscaloosa this year. On October 19-22, more than 40 teams from around the Southeast will participate in the tournament.

With the departure of five seniors, Coach Jenny Mainz has added four freshmen for 2006-07 to help reload the team (Alice-Mari Tunaru, Bianca Svensson, Nicole Briceno, Paulina Bigos and Tori Krutzer). All four should have an immediate impact. Svensson, from Atlanta, is the prize recruit. She was a high school All-America and led the Marist School to four consecutive state titles.

Senior Mari Muller is the Tide's leading returning player. Muller recorded her first 20-win season last year as a junior when she finished 21-16 on the year. The home slate in 2007 features 10 matches, highlighted by SEC rivals LSU, Arkansas and Auburn.

The women's team will also participate in the San Diego State Invitational and the SEC Fall Coaches Class.

MEN'S TENNIS

Bama will once again host the Crimson Tide Fall Championships in October of 2006. This year, four teams are slated to participate (Mississippi State, Georgia Tech, Miami and Nebraska), in addition to Alabama, as the tournament takes on a mock dual-match format for the first time. Alabama will also send players to the ITA All-American Championships and ITA Southeast Regional Championships during fall competition.

Coach Billy Pate returns his entire line-up from last year's NCAA Tournament squad and will still feature just one senior in 2006-07.

"Fitness and technique are really important to us in the fall," Pate, Bama's fifth-year coach, said. "When we're preparing for dual matches in the spring, the one-on-one work is tougher to get. Tennis is a truly a year-round sport, so it's important for us to have that individual time with them in the fall."

Joseph Jung was 21-17 last season while playing at the top spot in the line-up and qualified for the NCAA Tournament as a junior.



Jenny Suh is Tide's top women's golfer

Dan Buikema, Andrew Felsenthal and Sammy Struyf all won more than 15 times a year ago and will look to improve upon that mark in 2007. Pate has signed a pair of players during the off season, Saketh Myneni and Houssam Yassine. With the addition of Myneni and Yassine, Bama will have one of the deepest teams in the SEC with 11 players on roster. Myneni is someone who will have an immediate impact on the Tide's doubles line-up while Yassine could be a future No. 1 player for Alabama.

Alabama will host the Crimson Tide Fall Championships Homecoming weekend at The Capstone (October 26-29).

MEN'S GOLF

Alabama opens its 2006-07 men's golf season September 15-17 at The Carpet Capital Intercollegiate held at The Farm in Rocky Face, Georgia. Jay Seawell enters his fifth season at Alabama with yet another contender. Seawell advanced Alabama to NCAA postseason play in 2003, 2005 and again in 2006. Returning to help him contend are six men who have U.S. Amateur

experience, including four who advanced in 2006 (Mark Harrell, Matthew Swan, Thomas Hagler and transfer Michael Thompson) as well as Joseph Sykora, who advanced to the second round of Match Play in 2005, and Max Alverio who has also competed in the World Amateur.

The golf team returns intact with Swan, Harrell, Gator Todd and Sykora as staples in its top five last season along with Stewart Whitt who competed in seven of Alabama's 12 tournaments in 2005-06. Alverio, who played in all 13 tournaments in 2004-05, returns after taking a redshirt season last year. Swan, a Montgomery native who played on the USA Junior National Team at the World Team Amateur Championships in 2005, will be a sophomore. He led Alabama as a freshman with his 72.67 stroke average, just ahead of Harrell, who will be a junior, who had a 72.72 stroke average last season.

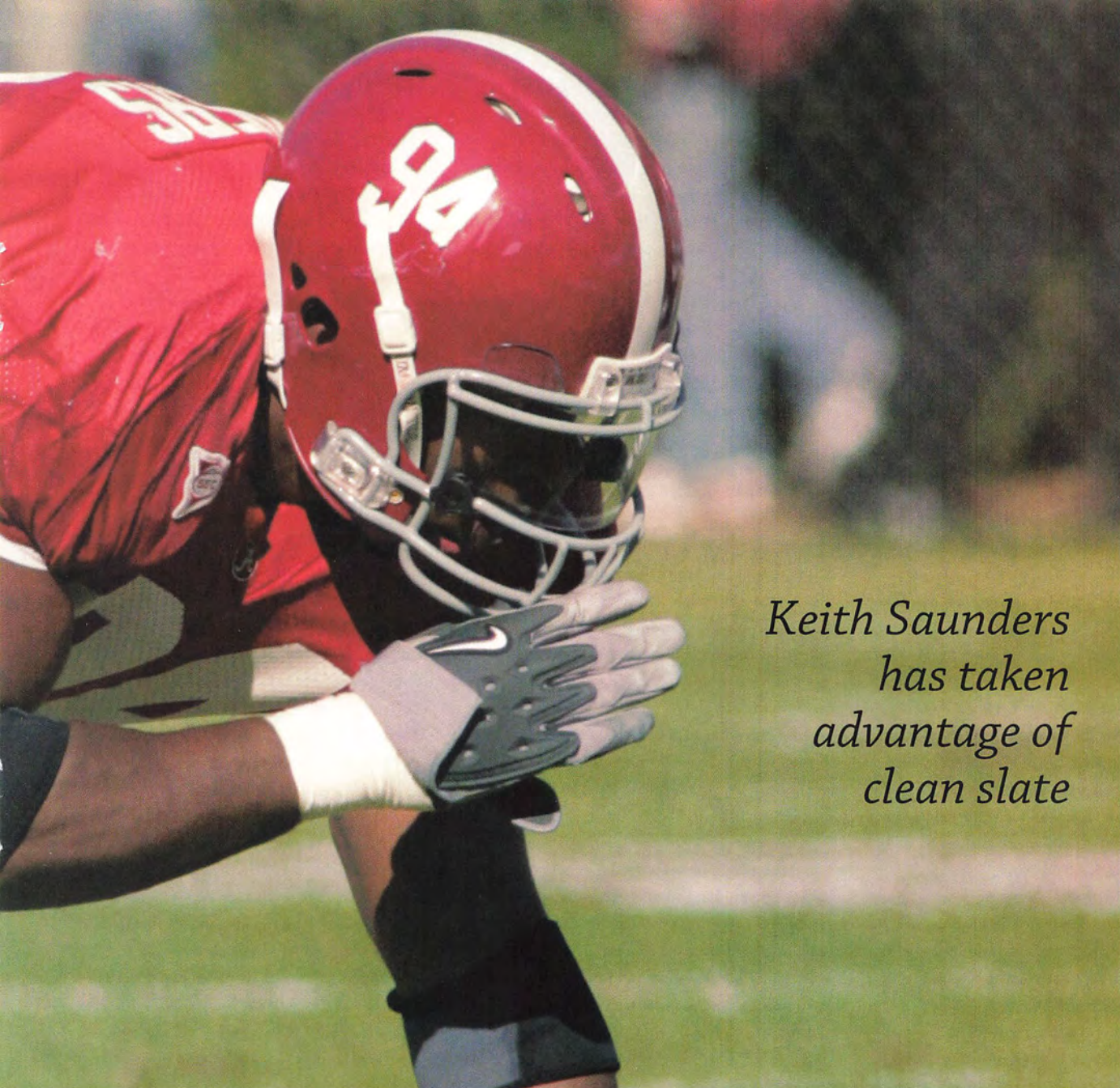
Alabama will again play host to the nation's best teams and collegiate golfers October 9-10 in Birmingham. The Tide is the host school for the Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate at Old Overton Club.



SPRINGBOARD

FOOTBALL BY KIRK MCNAIR





*Keith Saunders
has taken
advantage of
clean slate*

TO SUCCESS



Keith Saunders was an unexpected pick-up for Alabama. When Saunders finished his high school career at Holy Cross in Delran, New Jersey, he was just 17 years old and weighed "205, maybe 210," he said. The few schools recruiting him—Virginia, North Carolina, and Boston College—suggested he go to prep school to put on weight. He went to Hargrave Academy in Virginia.

Saunders had been a tight end his first two years in high school, then switched to defensive end after the second game of his junior year. He expected to be a defensive end at Hargrave, but when a tight end failed to show up, he was moved to offense.

That wouldn't be the biggest surprise he would get at Hargrave, though. "North Carolina backed out of their (scholarship) offer," Saunders said. "I was feeling pretty bad."

Then came what Saunders considers "a blessing." He said, "Out of no where, I got a call from Coach Randolph." Paul Randolph was Alabama's defensive ends coach. It was the first time Saunders had ever heard from Alabama. "All I knew about Bama football was watching on television—the team with numbers on the helmets," he said. Saunders had been born in New York and lived there until he was about 10. Then his family moved to Wilingboro, New Jersey, about 15 minutes from Philadelphia. He was a city boy. The closest relatives he had to Alabama were in North Carolina.

"I made a visit to Alabama right after signing day," he said. "That's when I knew this was the place for me. It was incredible. And everyone was so friendly, and they had a great coaching staff. I thought of it as home right away."

And, besides, it was his only offer.

Saunders has an opportunity to see some of his old Hargrave teammates. They are scattered around the Southeastern Conference—at Georgia and South Carolina and Arkansas and Ole Miss.

It was no surprise to Saunders that he was redshirted as a freshman in 2003. "I knew I needed to develop," he said.

Development seemed slow. In 2004, Saunders made it into only a handful of games. One of those was the opening game, a 48-17 win over Utah State. "That was exciting for me because I got to play in front of all those fans and my family was there. And just before the game ended, I got my first sack."

Still, that first year was mostly a learning by watching experience. "I watched Todd Bates and Mark Anderson and learned a lot," Saunders said.

Last year as a sophomore he worked into the five-man rotation with Bobby Greenwood behind Anderson at right end. (Wallace Gilberry

and Chris Harris were the left ends. This year Saunders and Greenwood have been joined by former wide receiver Zeke Knight, while Gilberry and Harris have Brandon Deaderick and Milton Talbot behind them.)

Although defensive ends are designated left and right, they are taught the assignments of both sides.

"Last year I felt more like a contributor," Saunders said. "I averaged about 15 snaps per game. I didn't make a lot of big plays, but I felt like I was pretty solid. Mark got most of the playing time and most of the attention, and he deserved it. He's a great player. And I learned a lot from him."

Saunders played in every game and totaled 175 snaps. He had 11 tackles, including three tackles for loss, and one sack.

But he was considered third team, and a distant third team behind back-up Bobby Greenwood. Although Saunders had more plays than Greenwood, Greenwood usually was the first substitute for Mark Anderson at right defensive end, and Greenwood had more tackles, sacks, and quarterback pressures.

Saunders called 2005 "a good foundation year for me. I learned how to watch film the right way and how to work in the off-season. I've learned how to play team defense. Tackles and ends have to work together, particularly in pass rush situations."

When Saunders reported for spring practice last February, he and the other defensive end candidates saw a new face in Crimson Tide coaching togs. Crimson Tide Head Football Coach Mike Shula had the first (and still only) change of an on-the-field assistant. Paul Randolph, who had coached defensive ends in Shula's first three years, left Bama for the job of assistant head coach at Rice.

There have been some rather high profile moves of coaches between Alabama and Vanderbilt over the years. Jess Neely left Vandy to become a member of the Wallace Wade staffs (1928-30). A young Paul Bryant left his post as a Bama assistant to work for Coach Red Sanders at Vanderbilt (1940-41). Last winter, Shula plucked David Turner from Vandy to coach Alabama defensive ends.

Saunders said, "I understood Coach Randolph leaving. He wants to be a head coach, and that was a good move for him. But Alabama brought in another great coach. And both have a good sense of humor. They teach about the same way. You would think they were brothers."

Turner said, "Keith probably looked at the coaching change with me coming in as a new opportunity, that everyone was starting with a clean

slate. I had become familiar with the defensive ends watching tape, but I had an open mind. I gave him a shot and he worked hard."

Saunders impressed Alabama's coaching staff with his spring. He won one of the more coveted awards, the Jerry Duncan I Like To Practice Award.

Turner said, "The game is important to Keith and he's worked at it. I know that every day he's going to show up and give a good day's work."

The Tide coach said that flexibility has been a point of emphasis with Saunders and that he had made improvement. "And we talk to all the guys about being consistent," Turner said.

"Flexibility" doesn't mean being an acrobat. It refers to angles and slants and pad level.

The Tide coach said that he wants the ends to continue to do well in rush defense, as has been the case at Alabama. "We want to improve in our pass rush," he said. "The things we're teaching are starting to make sense to Keith."

One advantage Saunders has in pass rush is quickness. "Something I've worked hard on is my 'get off'—getting off the ball quickly," Saunders said.

He also works hard in the weight room. "Strength is important," he said. "A defensive end has to have explosion and power."

The 6-3 junior is at 255 pounds this season. Last year he played at 245 pounds after having reported for fall camp at 260. "I ended up being too light," he said. "I think 255 is a good playing weight for me. I can handle that and move." Although Saunders hasn't been timed in the 40-yard dash in a while, at Hargrave he was clocked at 4.65.

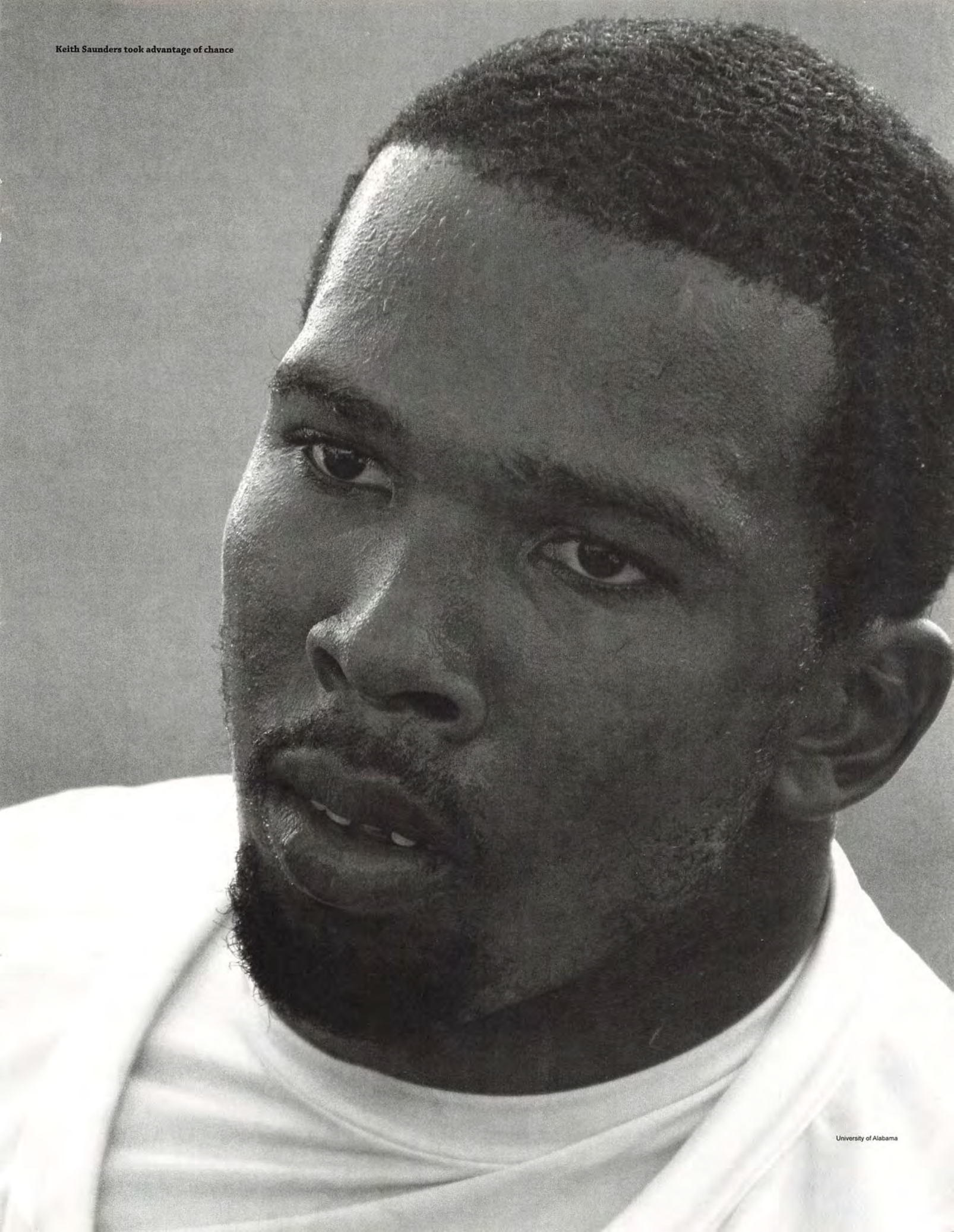
As Alabama was preparing to open the season, Alabama Head Coach Mike Shula said, "Keith had a good spring and is in good shape. He reported at over 250 pounds. I hope he continues to be a pleasant surprise."

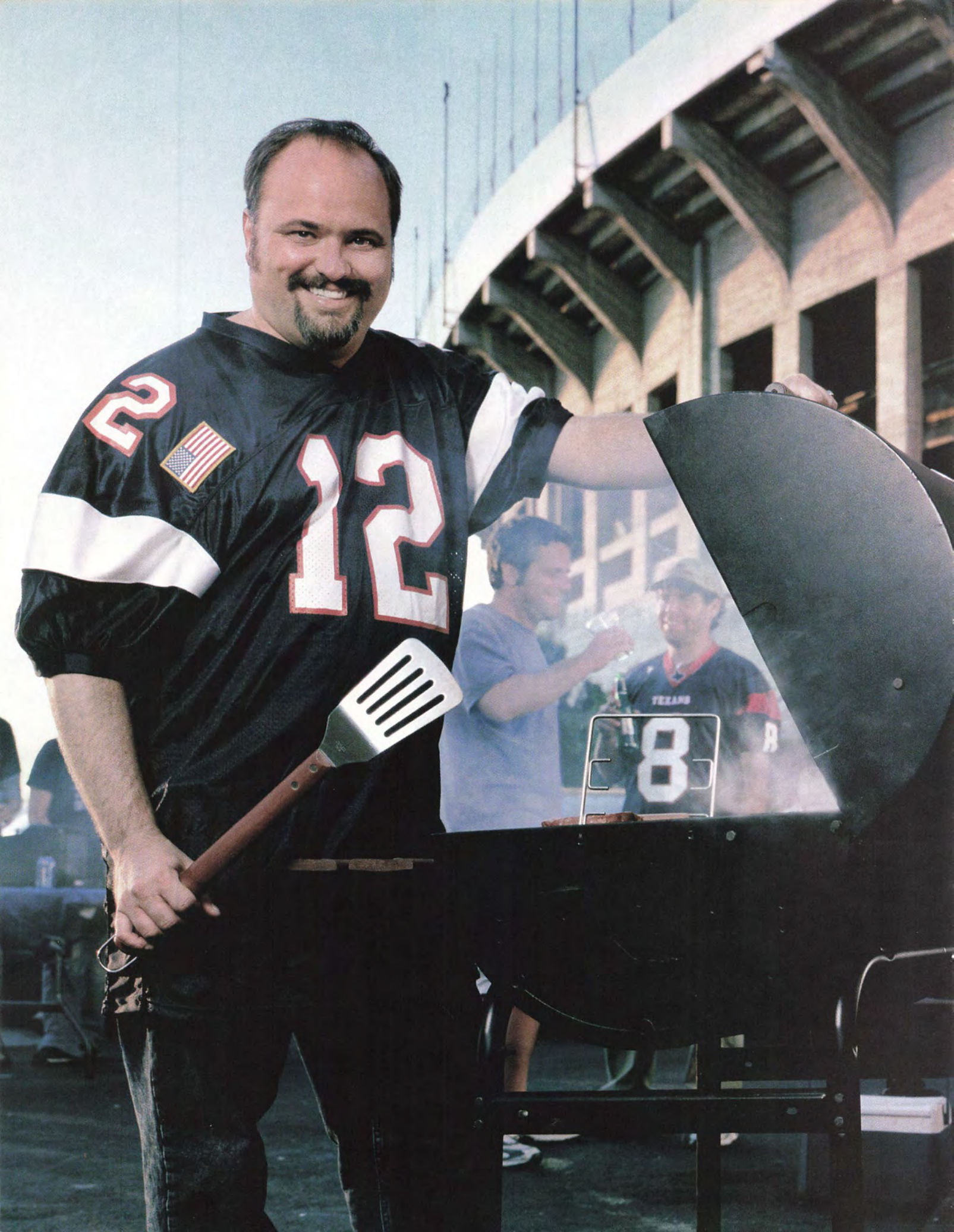
One thing Shula likes is competition between good players at a position. He said, "We have good competition at that end spot between Keith and Bobby."

Saunders has taken advantage of his opportunity on the football field. He's also taken advantage of the academic opportunity. He needs just 10 hours to earn his degree in management and will have that sheepskin just about the time he turns 22 on December 23. After that, he said, "I've already talked to my counselor about earning my master's degree."

Saunders said his general goal is "to get better at everything," and that he has specific team goals. "The national championship is number one," he said. "And I want Alabama to have the nation's number one ranked defense and for our defensive front to be the best." ■

Keith Saunders took advantage of chance







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GETTING ON BOARD

Tide men's basketball has big commitments

Much was made this summer when Alabama Football Coach Mike Shula announced that it appeared his 2006 football team would have the NCAA limit of 85 scholarship players. If Shula can make it to 85 following NCAA scholarship reductions, is it possible that Head Men's Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried might one day get to his limit of 13 scholarship players?

It's beginning to look like it could happen.

With the early signing period coming up in early November, four top prep stars have announced they will sign with Alabama. They are:

- Senario Hillman, a 6-2, 175-pound point guard from Wilkinson County High School in Irwinton, Georgia.
- Dontrell Taylor, a 6-8, 215-pound power forward from Dunwoody, Georgia.
- Rico Pickett, a 6-4, 185-pound point guard from Decatur.
- Justin Knox, a 6-8, 205-pound power forward from Tuscaloosa Central.

Hillman and Taylor committed last winter, Pickett and Knox this summer.

Hillman, Pickett and Knox are all four-star rated players by Scout.com, while Taylor is a two-star. Pickett is ranked the seventh best point guard in the nation, Hillman the 11th best strong guard.

Alabama is expected to begin this season with 12 scholarship players. That could change.

In an unlikely development, Bama could add a

late signee. To make it really a far-fetched scenario, suppose Ray George, the outstanding combination guard who has been trying to get out of Georgia Perimeter in Clarkston, Georgia, made the grade and entered Alabama? That would make 13.

Or Alabama could lose a player. Although the NCAA gave the okay to Genesis One School in Mendenhall, Mississippi, and allowed outstanding signee Verice Cloyd to enter The University this summer, there has been a report that Cloyd may have more hurdles. Cloyd's attorney, Donald Jackson, told CBSSportsline.com that the NCAA had sent Cloyd (and other prospects) a two-page questionnaire, "List of Required Documents," that could slow the process of Cloyd completing NCAA Clearinghouse status. The historical vindictiveness of the NCAA gives credence to the fear.

Or both—George comes in and Cloyd doesn't—putting the Tide again at 12.

This year's 12 includes only one senior, Jermareo Davidson. Theoretically, that means that 11 would return in 2007-08 when there will be at least the four announced commitments.

That makes 15 with the Tide supposedly still looking at other prospects.

Rico Pickett, the pre-season favorite to be the state's top boys player, is the heir apparent to Ron Steele at the point. His relationship with Gottfried was important to his choice of Bama. "He's been honest with me the whole time," the 20-point per

game scorer said. "Coach Gottfried hasn't told me that if I come this or that will happen. They've been on me the longest time and shown the most interest. It was time for me to be loyal to them like they were to me."

The fact that Bama took its time in evaluating and offering Pickett convinced the guard they were quite serious about him. "They were making sure that I was the player they wanted to play for their team."

Pickett's stock is on the rise. He averaged a whopping 20 points, 7 rebounds, and 6 assists as a junior. He picked Bama over Vanderbilt.

Stepping in one day for Steele will be a tall order but Pickett understands and will be ready for the challenge. "It's a lot of pressure but I'm used to it."

Gottfried has proved to be an excellent recruiter, and Alabama was going to be very tough to beat when the Crimson Tide had the advantage of not having to leave the city limits for a top performer. Once he got the offer, Justin Knox—who plays on the Tuscaloosa Central East campus about four blocks from Coleman Coliseum—was Alabama Bound.

"It was close to home and it was the best for my family who can come and watch," Knox said. "It's a good academic school." He also looked at and received interest from LSU, Auburn, Ole Miss, Georgia, Cincinnati, Columbia and Vanderbilt and picked the Tide over Florida.

This summer, Knox ran with the Birmingham Raptors and participated in the adidas Super Star camp. Long on potential and talent, he's a player the Tide can develop into a frontcourt presence.

"Alabama's a good basketball team. They made it to the big tournament a lot of years and I like how they get the ball to the big men."

Academics are a big reason top schools recruited him very hard. There are not a lot of potential seven-footers who have a 3.8 in the classroom and a 24 on the ACT.

Knox says his family used good grades as a way to motivate him, a move that will pay huge dividends in the future. "At my house it was no study, no play," Knox said. "If you don't make good grades, then you don't play. So, I make good grades."

Although a large number of prospects will list Alabama among the schools being considered, it is logical to assume that Gottfried and his staff will offer few—if any—additional players.

But going into the start of the fall academic year, there were some outstanding players reported by Scout.com National Recruiting Expert Dave Telep to be holding Bama offers. They are:

Chandler Parsons, a 6-7, 180-pound swing forward from Lake Howell, Florida; Tracy Smith, a 6-8, 235-pound power forward from Mount Zion Christian Academy in Durham, North Carolina; Malcolm Kirkland, a 6-7, 210-pound power forward from Central High School in Madison, Mississippi; and Zach Graham, a 6-5, 190-pound swing forward from Peachtree Ridge High School in Suwanee, Georgia.

Nick Williams, a top prospect from Mobile, announced this summer he was committed to Marquette.

Graham, who has a 6-11 wingspan, told BamaMag.com this summer that Alabama had offered him in basketball, but not football. A prep quarterback, he is considering signing in football.

Scout.com has listed some outstanding players who include Alabama as among their schools of interest, but most seem unlikely future Crimson Tiders. They include:

Forward James Anderson, 6-6, 190, of Junction City, Arkansas; center Martavius Adams, 6-8, 265, of Wilkerson County in Irwinton, Georgia; forward A.J. Stewart, 6-7, 200, of Arlington Country Day School in Jacksonville, Florida; guard Maurice Miller, 6-2, 180, of Raleigh Egypt High School in Memphis; center Dele Coker, 6-10, 245, of South Kent, Connecticut; point guard Juwon Long, 6-2, 175, of Liberty Technology School in Jackson, Tennessee; guard Jamar Moore, 6-5, 180, of Thomas County in Thomasville, Georgia; and forward Cliff Tucker, 6-6, of Chapin High in El Paso, Texas. ■

Justin Knox of Tuscaloosa commits to Bama



Jim Hawkins

Jeff Francoeur 7 | RF

Born: 01/08/1984
Birthplace: Atlanta, GA
Height: 6'4"
Weight: 220
Bats: Right
Throws: Right
MLB Debut: 07/07/2005



Andruw Jones 25 | CF

Born: 04/23/1977
Birthplace: Willemstad, Curacao
Height: 6'1"
Weight: 210
Bats: Right
Throws: Right
MLB Debut: 08/15/1996



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PREP PROSPECTS

Skill position players in Alabama

As Alabama's football team has built back towards good numbers of scholarship players, Crimson Tide football coaches can be more selective in recruiting, going for the best players regardless of position instead of having to recruit to specific needs. But even with a large number of returning scholarship players, Bama recruiters will have an eye on certain areas.

A casual look at the depth chart by class shows that Alabama is in reasonably good shape at most skill positions—offensive and defensive backs and wide receivers—for the next few years. Most would project the signing class of 2007 to include a large number of linebackers and defensive linemen.

Nevertheless, Alabama coaches will always have their eyes out for outstanding quarterbacks, running backs, wide receivers, and defensive backs. Sometimes a skill position player is capable of playing some other position, usually another skill position.

Alabama is one of a handful of truly national teams that can attract prospects from throughout the country. But it has been Bama practice to concentrate its recruiting efforts first in the state of Alabama and after that in the surrounding states of the Southeast.

Last month we looked at some big men (linemen, linebackers and tight ends) in the state of Alabama. This month we look at the in-state skill position players who are expected to be

prospects. These players will not necessarily be recruited by Alabama, and it is also possible that Crimson Tide coaches will offer one or more skill position players from within the state not listed here. The recruiting landscape changes as the season progresses, some players going up and some going down.

Here are some of the top prospects in Alabama, listed by position:

QUARTERBACK

Alabama entered the season with starting sophomore quarterback John Parker Wilson, senior Marc Guillon, redshirt freshman Jimmy Barnes and 2006 signee Greg McElroy. The Tide thus far has secured the verbal commitment of quarterback Robert Marve, from Plant High School in Tampa, Florida, for the class of 2007.

McElroy arrived on campus with an impressive resume. His senior season included passing yards of 4,600 with 56 touchdowns and only nine interceptions. He recorded 700 yards rushing and 12 touchdowns. He was named 5A (largest classification) Offensive Player of the Year after leading his team to the Texas state title.

"The tradition at Alabama and the opportunity to play in the SEC were two reasons I chose Alabama," McElroy said. "The tradition at Alabama is unmatched. Twelve national championships; and Joe Namath, Kenny Stabler, and all the other great



Terrell Edwards

Scout.com

players who played on that same field is really special to me."

Alabama waited until summer camps in June to observe several quarterbacks in action. (That goes for all positions as Bama does not ordinarily offer until getting an up-close look at prospects.) Robert Marve rose to the occasion and received a scholarship offer following his camp performance. A week later Marve gave his verbal pledge to the Tide.

"I really like all the coaches," Marve said. "Coach [Mike] Shula knew my dad from the NFL.



Brandon Gibson

Scout.com



Christian Smith

Scout.com



Zach Shaw

Scout.com



Michael McNeil

Scout.com

Coach Kines (Bama Defensive Coordinator Joe Kines) actually coached my dad." Marve's dad is Eugene Marve, former Tampa Bay linebacker.

Marve's junior season stats included 1,813 passing yards with 17 touchdowns.

Alabama's quarterback situation is bright for several years and the class of 2007 is likely finished at the signal-caller position opting to add more crucial depth positions needed such as linebackers and defensive lineman.

However, no school is likely to turn down a top prospect. Additionally, some quarterbacks could emerge who are capable of playing some other position. Bama's ex-quarterbacks include cornerback Ramzee Robinson, running back Jimmy Johns, and wide receivers Aaron McDaniel and Earl Alexander.

In-state quarterbacks on the radar for the Tide include Prattville's Larry Smith, 6-2, 200 pounds; Foley's Roosevelt Byrd 6-0, 205; and Susan

Moore's Zack Smith, 6-2, 190.

Quarterbacks who will make some noise throughout the state and expect to sign Division-1 scholarships include Daphne's Chris Lambeth, Homewood's Chip Ghigna, Oak Mountain's Richie Fordham and Colbert County's Ben Ezell.

Hoover's Ross Wilson, younger brother of Tide quarterback John Parker Wilson, excels on the baseball diamond as well as the gridiron and is expected to play baseball on the next level.

RUNNING BACK

The Crimson Tide is blessed with plenty of talent at the running back position. Senior tailback Kenneth Darby has a supporting cast including sophomore Jimmy Johns, sophomore Glen Coffee, redshirt freshman Roy Upchurch, redshirt freshman Ali Sharrief, and freshman Terry Grant.

Jamar Taylor, a senior at Lakeland, Florida,

gave his verbal pledge to Alabama for the class of 2007.

Terry Grant entered the freshman class as the second consecutive Mr. Football from Mississippi to sign with the Tide. Jimmy Johns was awarded the title the previous year. Grant led the state with over 2,700 yards, adding to his total of 8,000 career yards. He also broke the state record of 115 touchdowns.

Jamar Taylor hails from one of the strongest high school programs in the country. He recorded 1,217 yards and 27 touchdowns in a backfield shared with Florida verbal commitment Chris Rainey.

Several in-state talented running backs continued to shine in summer camps and the Scout.com combines. They are hoping a very productive senior season will garner attention from the Tide.

Terrell Edwards, 6-2, 210, from Mobile UMS-Wright, holds scholarship offers from Kentucky and Marshall. His junior season produced 751 yards with an average of 11.3 yards per carry. He added 15 touchdowns to his production.

Terrence Wilkes, 5-8, 165, from Wadley, rushed for 2,883 yards and broke the state record with 47 rushing touchdowns in his junior campaign.

Rico Sharpe, 6-0, 195, from Hewitt-Trussville, recorded over 1,000 yards rushing during his junior season and 18 touchdowns. College scouts also are looking at his talent as a defensive back.

Other in-state backs working hard for attention include: Hoover's Dennis King, Clay-Chalkville's Darrius Brown, Oak Mountain's Nick Anderson, Daphne's Darius Williams, Murphy's James Hall, Autaugaville's J.J. Motley, Grissom's Thomas Oliver, Pike County's James Jackson, Montgomery Carver's Darnodo Smith, and Faith Academy's Alfred Hawthorne.

WIDE RECEIVER

Tide quarterback John Parker Wilson does not have a shortage of talented wide-outs gracing the sidelines. Two of the more experienced returned as juniors in Keith Brown and D.J. Hall. Matt Caddell also returned as a junior. Sophomore Will Oakley has been hampered with hamstring injuries while in Tuscaloosa, but entered the fall healthy. Sophomores Nikita Stover and Aaron McDaniel are expected to battle for playing time throughout the season.

The freshman ball catchers include Earl Alexander, Jake Jones (moved from defensive back), and Mike McCoy.

Senior Tyrone Prothro takes a redshirt and plans to return in the fall of 2007 if all goes well

with the rehab of his horrific leg injury.

It is a very good year in the state of Alabama for wide receivers for the class of 2007, led by Scout.com four-star Brandon Gibson.

Gibson, 6-2 and 190 pounds, from UMS-Wright in Mobile, is the top receiver in the state and holds over a dozen scholarship offers. He plans to take official visits to Alabama, Auburn, LSU and Georgia before making a decision.

Gibson recorded 43 receptions for 1,750 yards and 13 touchdowns for his junior season. His talent includes great hands, concentration, and being a red zone threat. The Tide has led for his signature throughout the recruiting process.

Quindarius Carr, 6-2, 175, from Huntsville, does not have a leader among the teams extending scholarship offers. Alabama, Auburn and South Carolina have the early edge for his signature in February and all have offered. He recorded 26 receptions for 426 yards and seven touchdowns in his junior year.

Brandon Clear, 6-4, 205, from Hoover, moved to the prominent high school program for his senior year after a family transfer from Virginia. He holds scholarship offers from Army, Duke, Stanford, and Syracuse. He is comfortable with favorites Alabama, Duke, Florida, Ohio State Syracuse and Virginia Tech.

You know when you get that feeling when you step onto a campus you know you're suppose to be there? I felt like that at Alabama," Clear said after his summer visit. "I was amazed. I never visited, and I didn't know what to expect. Now Alabama is one of the leading candidates."

Christian Smith, 6-1, 205, from Birmingham Huffman, is the younger brother of Tide freshman Andre Smith. The big brother came to the Tide rated as the number one offensive lineman in the country by Scout.com. Christain holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, LSU, Clemson and Tennessee.

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His junior season included 500 yards rushing and 400 yards receiving.

"Everyone thinks I am going to Alabama," Smith said. "I want everyone to know I am interested in everyone equally. I don't have an overall favorite. I am going to wait until after I take all of my visits before I make a decision."

Marquez Strickland, 6-1, 196, from Opelika, is one of the best speed receivers in the state. His junior season was his first on the offensive side of the ball recording 561 yards rushing on 56 carries and eight touchdowns. He tallied 28 receptions for 487 yards and two touchdowns and added two touchdowns on returns. His Scout.com combine and summer camp performances landed him on the recruiting map with an impressive 4.4-second 40-yard dash time. He continues to hear from schools from across the South, and a break-out senior season is important to land at the next level.

Lydarius Friend, 6-4, 205, from Buckhorn in New Market, was named all-region following his junior season. He holds scholarship offers from Arkansas and Louisville and several SEC schools, including Alabama, are keeping a close eye on his senior season.

Other wide receivers looking for a break-out year include: Clay-Chalkville's Sam Edwards, Houston Academy's Stanley Jones, Briarwood Christian's Nate Carlson, Daphne's Richie Henderson, Sumiton Christian's Justin Craig, Homewood's Tyler Robbins, Birmingham Carver's Felipe Henderson, Trinity Presbyterian's Zack Shaw, Erwin's Tim Alexander, John Carroll's Demarcus Covington, Birmingham West End's Corderius Bimbo, Murphy's William Bjorkland, Hueytown's



Joshua Balckmon, and Montgomery Academy's Anthony McCall.

DEFENSIVE BACKS

After the Tide lost senior leadership in the defensive backfield to the NFL, Ramzee Robinson returned as a senior starter to help teach the young ones behind him how it all begins on defense. Senior Jeffrey Dukes came in from junior college two years ago and has been a force throughout his time on campus.

Simeon Castille, Marcus Carter and Eric Gray returned as juniors with sophomores Lionel Mitchell, Cory Reamer and Rashad Johnson and redshirt freshman Chris Rogers.

The Tide coaching staff replenished the position with the 2006 class with freshmen Javier Arenas, Sam Burnthall, Tremayne Coger, Andy Davis, Marquis Johnson and Justin Woodall.

Alabama has received two defensive back verbal commitments for the 2007 signing class, both from Florida prep stars. They are: Chris Lett, from Pensacola, and Sherod Murdock, from Tampa Middleton.

The well-respected coach at Pensacola praises his talented player from the Florida panhandle. "He's a great athlete, plays basketball and runs track," Coach Mike Bennett said of Lett. "I coached in the Florida-California All-Star game, and he's as good as anyone I've had out there. He is that corner that everyone is looking for with his ability and his height to match up against the tall receivers." Lett recorded 29 tackles and four interceptions during his junior season.

"I didn't really pick Alabama over any school,"

Murdock said after verbally committing to the Tide. "They have been my favorite since the beginning. I had received a written offer from Pittsburgh. I had verbal offers from West Virginia, Ohio State and South Carolina."

Michael McNeil, 6-2, 197 pounds, from Mobile Davidson, is a safety prospect with over a dozen scholarship offers including his favorites Alabama, Auburn and Florida State.

McNeil recorded 81 tackles as a junior and his decision will come some time during the season. His grandfather, Clifton McNeil, was an NFL All-Pro receiver and is a big influence in his grandson's decision.

"I still plan to make my decision by the start of school, but my grandad may want me to wait and take a few official visits," McNeil said. "I know I will have my mind made up by then, but I may not make my commitment then."

Elliott McGaskin, 6-1, 190, from B. C. Rain in Mobile, is another safety prospect with an impressive scholarship offer list including South Carolina, Clemson, Ole Miss, Illinois, Mississippi State, Purdue, West Virginia and South Florida. In his junior season he saw action on both sides of the ball rushing for over 1,200 yards with 10 touchdowns. Defense is his strong-suit with 95 tackles and one interception in his junior campaign.

McGaskin has been patient with the Tide extending a scholarship offer and his senior season may determine if he stays home to play college football for the next four or five years.

Other in-state defensive backs to watch during their senior seasons: Prattville's Ricardo Bates, Fairfield's Erick Daniel, Ft. Payne's Jeremy Underwood, Spain Park's Justin Diliberto, St. Paul's Omar Johnson, Homewood's Kenneth Baker, Jefferson Davis' William Spight, Auburn's Sonta Whatley, Lafayette's Desmond Holloway, B.C. Rain's LaMichael Howell, Charles Henderson's Harrison Bryant, UMS-Wright's Erling Riis, Davidson's Travis Means, Baker's Ken Dailey, Hoover's Kwesi Mitchell, Loachapoka's Cory Hart, Fairfield's Alex Mason, Sidney Lanier's Broderick Ferguson, Buckhorn's Akeem Norwood and New Freedom Academy's Octavious and Omar Leftwich.

Scout.com four-star cornerback Ryan Williams, from Mobile-B.C. Rain, gave his verbal pledge to Auburn in August. Scout.com four-star cornerback Phelon Jones, from Mobile-McGill-Toolen, verbally committed to the Miami Hurricanes. ■

2007 ALABAMA FOOTBALL PROSPECTS

A major college football team does not wait long after Signing Day to begin lining up the next year's class. Much of the work with upcoming seniors has already been done. Nevertheless, offers and visits and the majority of recruiting is now under way. Here are some prospects who have been identified with Alabama, although—to be sure—this is not Alabama's official recruiting list. There are some on this list who will not be recruited by Alabama, and there are players not on this list who will be recruited by the Crimson Tide.

Name	Pos	Hgt	Wgt	40-time	Hometown (High School)	Name	Pos	Hgt	Wgt	40-time	Hometown (High School)
Hubert Ayniam	WR	6-0	180	4.5	Garland, Texas (North Garland)	Xavier Lamb	LB	5-11	215	4.7	Tallahassee (Lincoln)
Allen Bailey	DE	6-4	245	4.8	Darien, Ga. (McIntosh Co. Academy)	Pat Lazear	LB	6-1	215	4.6	Bethesda, Md. (Walt Whitman)
Ricardo Bates	DB	5-11	170	4.5	Prattville	*Chris Lett	S	6-1	210	4.6	Pensacola, Fla. (Pensacola)
Jonathan Beasley	LB	6-2	215	4.7	Montgomery (Jeff Davis)	*Robert Marve	QB	6-2	190	4.7	Tampa, Fla. (Plant)
Rickey Booker	LB	6-2	240	4.7	Orlando (Dr. Phillips)	*Rolando McClain	LB	6-4	230	4.68	Decatur
John Brown	DT	6-1	285	N/A	Lakeland, Fla.	*Alfred McCullough	DT	6-3	297	5.1	Athens
*Kortnei Brown	DE	6-5	210	4.6	Charlotte, N.C. (Victory Christian)	Elliott McGaskin	S	6-1	190	4.5	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
Justin Byrd	S	6-2	185	4.6	Chatom (Washington Co)	*Jermaine McKenzie	WR	6-1	179	4.4	Bradenton, Fla. (Bradenton Academy)
Nate Carlson	WR	6-3	205	4.56	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)	Michael McNeil	S-WR	6-2	197	4.5	Mobile (Davidson)
Quindarius Carr	WR	6-2	175	4.5	Huntsville	Travis Means	DB	5-10	175	N/A	Mobile (Davidson)
Brandon Clear	WR	6-4	206	4.4	Williamsburg, Va. (Jamestown)	*Sherod Murdock	CB	6-0	175	4.5	Tampa, Fla. (Middleton)
Sidell Corley	DE	6-4	250	4.8	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)	Kerry Murphy	DT	6-4	300	5.1	Birmingham (Hoover)
*Patrick Crump	OL	6-3	280	N/A	Birmingham (Hoover)	Darnell Ratcliff	RB	5-11	187	4.5	Chicago (King)
Jeffrey Daniels	LB	6-2	230	4.8	Brantley	Matt Romine	OL	6-6	270	5.3	Tulsa, Okla. (Union)
Enrique Davis	RB	6-1	215	4.38	Lynn Haven, Fla. (Mosley)	James Scott	CB	5-10	180	4.5	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Seabreeze)
Michael DeJohn	LB	6-0	220	4.7	Birmingham (Hoover)	Rico Sharpe	RB	6-0	190	4.5	Trussville (Hewitt-Trussville)
Antwon Dixon	WR	6-1	195	4.6	Terry, Miss.	Zack Shaw	WR	6-2	190	4.6	Montgomery (Trinity Presbyterian)
Sam Edwards	WR	6-2	175	4.55	Pinson (Clay-Chalkville)	Christian Smith	WR	6-2	210	4.5	Birmingham (Huffman)
Terrell Edwards	RB	6-2	210	4.6	Mobile (UMS Wright)	E.J. Smith	WR	6-1	185	4.5	Camden, Miss. (Velma Jackson)
Mark Fisher	OG-DE	6-4	280	5.3	Madison, Tenn. (Goodpasture)	Larry Smith	QB	6-2	200	4.6	Prattville
Demarcus Fox	WR	6-0	180	4.43	Calhoun City, Miss.	Zach Smith	QB	6-2	190	4.5	Blountsville (Susan Moore)
Stephon Francois	S	6-2	215	4.5	Reserve, La. (E. St. John)	D.J. Stafford	DE	6-3	240	N/A	LaGrange, Ga.
Lydarius Friend	WR	6-4	205	4.6	New Market (Buckhorn)	John Stokes	LB	6-5	225	4.7	Memphis (University)
Stephen Garcia	QB	6-3	212	4.7	Tampa (Jefferson)	Marquez Strickland	WR	6-2	195	4.55	Opelika
*Nick Gentry	DT	6-3	270	4.78	Prattville	Golden Tate	WR	6-0	180	4.4	Hendersonville, Tenn. (John Paul II)
Chip Ghigna	QB	6-3	204	4.7	Homewood	*Jamar Taylor	RB	5-10	205	4.6	Lakeland, Fla. (Lakeland)
Brandon Gibson	WR	6-2	190	4.55	Mobile (UMS Wright)	Caleb Thomas	OL	6-3	290	5.4	Decatur
Corey Hart	S-WR	6-2	203	4.6	Loachapoka	Terrence Thomas	LB	6-0	215	4.6	Eufaula
Austin Hayes	OL	6-3	240	5.0	Cedar Bluff	Drew Traylor	DE	6-5	220	4.7	Mountain Brook
Lionel Henderson	OL	6-4	280	4.94	Mobile (Davidson)	*William Vlachos	OL	6-2	300	5.1	Mountain Brook
Rashad Henry	CB	5-10	165	4.4	Lumberton, Miss.	Jamison Wadley	DE	6-4	240	4.75	Attalla (Etowah)
*Jennings Hester	LB	6-3	215	4.7	Atlanta (Marist)	Chris Walker	LB	6-2	240	4.6	Memphis (Christian Bros.)
Herschel Houston	LB-RB	6-0	220	4.6	Centre (Cherokee Co.)	Dallas Walker	QB	6-5	201	4.75	Madison, Miss., (Ridgeland Acad.)
Rodney Hudson	L	6-3	285	5.2	Mobile (B.C. Rain)	*Alex Watkins	DE	6-4	225	4.6	Brownsville, Tenn. (Haywood)
Darius Jackson	DT	5-10	224	4.9	Fairfield	Terrence Wilkes	RB	5-8	165	4.45	Wadley
Nathan Jew	RB	5-10	193	4.55	Jackson, Miss. (Jackson Academy)	*LaMarcus Williams	DT	6-1	285	5.0	Bastrop, La. (Bastrop)
Michael Keck	LB	6-5	220	4.6	Harrisonville, Mo.	Ryan Williams	CB	5-11	185	4.5	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
Dennis King	RB	5-7	175	4.45	Hoover	K.J. Wright	DE	6-4	210	4.68	Olive Branch, Miss.
						Darius Young	WR	6-1	205	N/A	Shannon, Miss.
						*Committed to Alabama					

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Rutledge patterns coaching style after Bryant

Some people think Coach Paul Bryant's strict, hard-nosed, old-school methods of dealing with young people wouldn't work today. Don't tell that to Jeff Rutledge.

One of Alabama's all-time winningest quarterbacks, Rutledge hasn't shied away from demanding Bryant-style standards in the football program at Montgomery Bell Academy. Rutledge serves as both athletics director and head football coach at the private school in Nashville, Tennessee.

"When I was there at Alabama, Coach Bryant was nearing the end of his career, but everybody still greatly respected him and wanted to bust his tail for him," said Rutledge, now 49. "He was going to get your best—and not just on the football field. He taught us about life and instilled in us discipline."

"A lot of the tendencies and beliefs I have as a coach today, I got from him. I remember Coach Bryant being a stickler about how we dressed as players. He didn't want us to stand out as individuals. He wanted all of us to look the same and be one team. And that's the approach I take today, too. People think I'm old school, but I just tell them that I learned from Coach Bryant, and it worked for him, and if they don't like how we do things here, they don't need to be a part of the program."

Rutledge, a Birmingham native, first came to Nashville in 1995, serving as the quarterbacks coach at Vanderbilt under Woody Widenhofer until 2000. After leaving Vanderbilt, Rutledge, hoping to stay in Nashville, turned his thoughts toward Montgomery Bell Academy, a school he had had dealings with because of recruiting and a school he had gained an enormous amount of respect for because of its emphasis on discipline and character. The school, likewise, was impressed by Rutledge, and brought him aboard as its athletics director and head football coach.

"It seemed almost like divine timing," Montgomery Bell Academy Headmaster Bradford Gioia said of Rutledge's hiring.

It didn't take long to start seeing results.

In Rutledge's first two seasons as head coach, the Big Red won back-to-back state championships. They made it to the state semifinals in 2004 and returned to the state playoffs again last year. But Rutledge sees beyond just the wins and losses when he reflects on his experiences at Montgomery Bell Academy so far.

"The kids are what make it special, and I'm just trying to be a good role model for them," he said. "We really emphasize having fun playing football because you're only young once. The other thing that makes you feel good inside is when you watch a kid walk across that stage and receive his diploma, especially because I know how tough our school is academically. That's definitely the ultimate—seeing them graduate."

Gioia knows where Rutledge's priorities lie, which is one of the reasons he believes Rutledge is such a perfect fit for the school. Rutledge, Gioia said, doesn't just care about the football players' success on the field, he cares about the personal lives of not just the football players but all the Montgomery Bell Academy student-athletes.

"What I think is special about Jeff is that he has all the background and history, being a star-studded athlete who played under Coach Bryant and played in the pros, but it's what's underneath all that that really makes the difference to us," Gioia said. "It comes down to who he is at his core. That's why he fits in so well with our school motto of: Gentleman. Scholar. Athlete."

Rutledge said he has no plans to leave Montgomery Bell Academy anytime soon but realizes life can change very quickly.

"I can't find myself in any better situation than I'm in right now," he said. "Of course, one phone call can change your life, but I'm certainly not looking to leave. I know one thing, it would be hard to ever leave the city of Nashville."

Rutledge and wife, Laura, who's also an Alabama alum, have three grown children—Brooks, 27, Christen, 25, and Meg, 23—who all live in the

Nashville area. Meg also has the Rutledges' lone grandchild at the moment.

"I'm thrilled to be a grandparent, and I also play a lot of golf with Brooks," Rutledge said.

Family has always been important to Rutledge, but it became even more important after what happened to him in May 2003. On his way back from Memphis, Rutledge's car, going 70 miles per hour, hit a truck that was stopped in his lane. Rutledge, in critical condition, was flown to Memphis where he underwent surgery on his face and neck. Amazingly, he survived and then endured a lengthy recovery process. He's still numb on the left side of his face from his lip down and also by his ear and is not expected to ever regain feeling in those areas. Rutledge, though, is just thankful to be alive.

"It was a miracle," he said. "It made me rethink life. You wake up every day and think everything is going to automatically happen like it always does, and then you go through something like that and you appreciate every single day of life so much more. At the time, I thought, too, how I almost didn't get to see my daughters get married and walk them down the aisle. I was really fortunate that God spared my life. I just try and live one day at a time and be thankful."

One of his past experiences Rutledge remains thankful for to this day is the opportunity he had to play football at Alabama under Bryant. Rutledge played from 1975-1978, starting his final three seasons after serving as Richard Todd's back-up in '75.

"What I remember most about my time at Alabama are my teammates—that's what's so special about sports," he said. "Winning a national championship my senior year, the games against Auburn and the bowl games all stand out in my memory, too."

Despite playing in the run-oriented Wishbone offense, Rutledge racked up some pretty impressive passing statistics during his career. In fact, Rutledge had similar, even better, numbers than Joe Namath, who played in a much more pass friendly attack.

Rutledge completed 207-of-372 passes for 3,351 yards during his career compared to Namath, who completed 203-of-374 for 2,714 yards. Rutledge threw 13 touchdown passes his senior year to finish with 30 for his career. And, to think, all those numbers could have been even more gaudy had he not been running the option.

"If I could do it all again, I'd still go down and play for Alabama," Rutledge said, "but my strength was passing. Obviously, I wish I had been in a Brodie Croyle type offense while I was there, but we won a lot of football games and we won a national championship with the offense we ran."

Winning was certainly the theme during Rutledge's three-year tenure as Alabama's starting quarterback. The Tide went 3-0 versus Auburn with two of those wins featuring two of Rutledge's all-time best individual performances. In 1977, he ran for a career-high 102 yards in a 48-21 romp, and in 1978 he threw for a career-high three touchdown passes in a 34-16 thumping.

Jerry Duncan, Alabama's sideline reporter at the time, also remembers one of Rutledge's not-so-good days.

"John Forney, Doug Layton and I cried all the way back from Lincoln, Nebraska, after we lost to the Cornhuskers in 1977," Duncan said. "It was the second game of the season, and Jeff threw five interceptions that day. After that, he didn't throw another interception for 100 passes."

Rutledge's streak of 100 passes without an interception is tied for the fourth best mark in Alabama history. So how do you go from five interceptions one game and then follow that with 100 straight passes without a pick? Bryant, perhaps?

"Yeah, he probably had a few words to say to him after that Nebraska game," Duncan said with a smile.

Rutledge also helped Alabama go 3-0 versus Tennessee and 3-0 in bowl games, including victories over big-name schools like UCLA, Ohio State and Penn State. It was the 14-7 win over Penn State in the 1979 Sugar Bowl that secured Alabama's 11th national championship.

As a starting quarterback, Rutledge posted a sterling 33-5 record, more wins than any Tide quarterback except Jay Barker, who accumulated 35 by the time he finished in 1994.

"He was one of those guys who commanded a lot of respect in the huddle," Duncan said of Rutledge. "I remember watching him on the sideline, and the guy was just a great student of the game."

Rutledge, though, hardly views the 33-5 mark as any type of individual accomplishment.

"I like to think that in the huddle I was a positive guy and maybe that had an impact on

Jeff Rutelege (11) and Coach Paul Bryant



University of Alabama

the rest of the guys, but, really we just played as a team," he said. "We didn't have any individuals. It was all about team, which is why Alabama has still never had a Heisman Trophy winner to this day. Tony Nathan could have won the Heisman while I was there but we didn't give the ball to him 40 times a game."

There is, however, one thing Alabama has that no other team has—two brothers who quarterbacked national championship teams. Gary Rutledge, Jeff's older brother, led the Tide to a national championship in 1973. In 2005, artist David L. Taylor commemorated the unique achievement with a painting depicting both Gary and Jeff entitled, 'Championship Brothers.'

"It was awesome," Jeff said of the art piece. "The young man who did the painting did a lot of research in finding out that we're the only two brothers who have accomplished that."

Jeff said there was never a doubt in his mind that he wanted to follow his brother to Alabama.

"A lot of brothers want to go some place and do their own thing," he said. "Eli Manning didn't want to follow Peyton. I really wanted to follow my brother, and, not only that, but wear the same number he wore—No. 11. My brother was my best

friend and I respected him so much. He was also a heckuva quarterback. So wanting to follow him was an easy choice for me."

After Alabama, Rutledge spent 14 seasons in the NFL, highlighted by three trips to the Super Bowl. Twice, with the New York Giants in 1987 and the Washington Redskins in 1992, he was on the victorious side.

"I got to play for two of the all-time best coaches in Bill Parcells and Joe Gibbs," Rutledge said, "and while I didn't have near the ability of some of those guys in the league, I played hard."

After retiring from the NFL, Rutledge lived briefly in Atlanta before joining Widenhofer at Vanderbilt. His heart, though, will always belong to Alabama.

"I follow the Crimson Tide as much as I can," he said. "I watch them on TV and try to make it to two or three games a year. I think Coach (Mike) Shula has done a great job, particularly in recruiting. I think the key for Alabama this year will be the play of the quarterback—John Parker Wilson."

If Wilson can play anywhere close to how No. 11 played for Alabama in the mid-to-late '70s, Alabama should be all right. ■

'BAMA Scorecard

Notebooking Crimson Tide Sports

2007 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

The two things most notable in Alabama's 2007 football schedule, which was officially released this summer, are the Florida State game on September 29 and the open date on October 27.

The last game to be determined in next year's Alabama football schedule is against Western Carolina, which will be the season-opening game for the Crimson Tide on September 1 at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

The FSU game on September 29 from the Alltel Stadium Jacksonville, Florida, is officially a neutral site.

Unlike this season, when Bama plays 12 consecutive weeks, the Crimson Tide will have an open date late in the 2007 season, on October 27, between the Tennessee and Mississippi State games.

The Crimson Tide's 12-game regular season schedule features clashes at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa with traditional SEC foes Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee and LSU, in addition to non-conference battles with Western Carolina, Houston and Louisiana-Monroe.

Four of the five games away from Tuscaloosa will be against SEC opponents: at Vanderbilt, at Ole Miss, at Mississippi State, and at Auburn.

The 2007 SEC Football Championship Game is slated to be held Saturday, December 1, at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

Alabama will not have consecutive week road games in 2007.

The 2007 Alabama football schedule:

Sept. 1 Western Carolina
Sept. 8 @ Vanderbilt
Sept. 15 Arkansas
Sept. 22 Georgia
Sept. 29 FSU @ Jacksonville
Oct. 6 Houston
Oct. 13 @ Ole Miss
Oct. 20 Tennessee

Nov. 3 @ Mississippi State
Nov. 10 LSU
Nov. 17 Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 24 @ Auburn
SEC Championship Game Dec. 1 in Atlanta

SONS

Alabama Football Coach Mike Shula said it made him feel old to have sons of two of his former teammates as freshmen reporting for fall camp this year. Wide receiver Jake Jones is the son of Joey and placekicker Leigh Tiffin is the son of Leigh, both playing the positions their famous fathers played at Alabama.

Other sons of former Alabama players include offensive lineman Scott Deaton, whose father Ken was an offensive lineman; fullback Patrick Hanrahan, whose father, Gary, was an offensive lineman; and tight end Stabler Gray, whose father Alan was a quarterback.

DAVIS DENIED

Alabama basketball received disappointing, if not surprising news when Bama's appeal for a fifth year of eligibility for former Tide star Chuck Davis was denied by the NCAA. Davis suffered what now proves to be a career-ending injury in the opening SEC game last January.

"His appeal has been denied," Gottfried said. "We got that in writing. We felt with circumstances in his family, it was the right thing to do to apply to try to get a fifth year. He was a graduate in three and a half years and has done everything like you're supposed to do."

Davis was an all-star performer as a junior in 2004-05, then suffered a knee injury against Ole Miss last January. He had played only a few games as a true freshman, then blossomed as a sophomore and junior.

ESPY WINNERS

Alabama wide receiver Tyrone Prothro was named winner of the 2006 ESPY Award for Best Play as presented by the cable sports network, ESPN. Prothro received his award in a televised July banquet at the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles. Also, former Crimson Tide running back Shaun Alexander earned an ESPY for Best Record Breaking Performance.

Prothro earned the honor for his spectacular catch to key an Alabama comeback victory over Southern Mississippi on September 10 in Tuscaloosa. With the Crimson Tide trailing, 21-10, late in the second quarter and facing a fourth-and-12 situation, Prothro caught the Brodie Croyle pass over the head and on the back of a USM defender for a 42-yard gain. The play put the Tide on the USM one-yard line and set up an Alabama touchdown, trimming the deficit to 21-17 and setting the Tide on their way to an eventual 30-21 victory.

Prothro, whose season was cut short by a broken leg suffered three weeks later against Florida, finished the USM game with 279 all-purpose yards including 134 yards receiving on seven catches.

Playing in only five games in 2005, Prothro made 17 catches for 325 yards (19.1-yard average) and three touchdowns. He also averaged 27.6 yards per kickoff return (seven for 193 yards) while averaging 138.2 all-purpose yards per game.

Shaun Alexander, the all-time career leader in rushing yards at Alabama, earned an ESPY for his outstanding performance while leading the Seattle Seahawks to the 2005 National Football Conference (NFC) title and a berth in Super Bowl XL against the Pittsburgh Steelers. Alexander was NFL Most Player of the Year.

The Florence, Kentucky, native rushed for 3,565 yards and 41 touchdowns for the Crimson

Tide from 1996-99, earning All-America honors in 1999 along with being named Southeastern Conference Player of the Year that season. In 2005, Alexander led the NFL in rushing with 1,880 yards and a league-best 27 rushing touchdowns.

He was particularly valuable in the playoffs as he led the league with 236 rushing yards while scoring two touchdowns. Alexander led all rushers in Super Bowl XL with 95 yards on 20 carries.

The ESPY Awards presented by ESPN are held annually to honor the year's best sports moments and athletes. The cable network said a record 12.1 million votes were tabulated, with fans voting online to decide the winners for the third consecutive year.

NEW COACH

Randy Hasenbank has joined the Alabama women's track and field coaching staff, replacing Steve Keith as head of the cross country program. The change came just weeks before the start of the season when Keith accepted the job of head cross country coach at his alma mater, Vanderbilt.

Head Coach Sandy Fowler said Hasenbank "is a major addition to our staff. During the interview

process it became evident that he had done his homework in regards to our ladies and our program. He comes in with a definite plan and direction for our distance program. He adds strength in an area we need to strengthen."

The 2005 Missouri Valley Conference Cross Country Coach of the Year, Hasenbank joins the Tide after four years at Wichita State where he served as head coach of the men's and women's cross country teams and assistant coach for the track and field program. He led the Shockers to the 2005 MVC Cross Country Championship and his athletes earned four All-American honors and were named NCAA Midwest Region Athlete of the Year.

He coached Wichita State athletes to 64 All-Conference honors and 18 conference championships. His athletes broke 10 school records and 12 of them earned NCAA qualifying marks.

The St. George, Kansas, native also coached Andover High School, Cloud County Community College and the Andover Track Club.

As an athlete, Hasenbank earned All-American honors as a member of the Cloud County track and field/cross country team. At Wichita State he was a four-time All-MVC performer and led the Shockers

to the 1989 MVC Cross Country Championship. A member of the Wichita State Athletics Director's Honor Roll, Hasenbank earned a bachelor's degree in Physical Education in 1990 and a Master's degree in Sports Administration in 1995, both from Wichita State.

U.S. AMATEURS

While most University of Alabama students, including student-athletes, were busy getting started on classes in the last week of August, four men's golf team members were at Hazeltine National Golf Course in Chaska, Minnesota, having qualified for the 2006 United States Amateur Championship.

Amateur golfers earn their way into the national tournament through qualifying tournaments.

Sophomore Matthew Swan of Montgomery and senior Thomas Hagler of Ringgold, Georgia, tied for first and took two of the three available spots in sectional qualifying at the Piedmont Driving Club in Atlanta. This will be Swan's third appearance in the tournament, beginning following his junior year in



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high school. He is the only Alabama golfer ever to qualify for the tournament three times. Hagler will be making his second showing in the U.S. Amateur.

Junior Mark Harrell finished third in a qualifier in South Carolina to advance to his second career U.S. Amateur appearance.

Michael Thompson, a Tucson native who will be a junior on the Alabama team this fall and is a transfer from Tulane, won the final spot in a playoff in a qualifier in Prescott, Arizona.

Alabama's Jerry Pate won the U.S. Amateur in 1974 while he was a Tide golfer. Pate also won the World Amateur before turning pro.

CURTIS CUPPER

Jenny Suh, an upcoming senior for the Alabama women's golf team, had a summer to remember, particularly for being selected as one of eight amateur players to represent the United States in the prestigious Curtis Cup. The United States retained the cup with a victory over Great Britain-Ireland in the biennial competition, held this year on the Pacific Course at the Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Bandon, Oregon.

Suh earned All-America as she led the Tide to its first NCAA Championship appearance in nearly two decades as a junior last season.

BASEBALL TITLE

It's unlikely that anyone would have suspected Lacy Prejean to be a part of a baseball team, much less a world championship baseball team. While young girls sometimes have only baseball as a choice, the game of choice for young women is softball. Prejean was an outstanding softball player for Alabama, helping the Crimson Tide to two Women's College World Series appearances. But this summer the former catcher earned a spot on the 18-woman roster for the Team USA women's baseball team.

In Tienanum Baseball Stadium in Taipei, Taiwan, this summer, Prejean helped Team USA win its second consecutive gold medal at the IBAF Women's World Cup.

Team USA had a 5-1 record in the tournament, falling in the opener then coming back to win five in a row and defeat Japan for the championship.

Prejean made the U.S. team after a try out in Phoenix, Arizona. USA Baseball selects and trains the women's national baseball team. Prejean, who earned a bachelor's degree in business from Alabama in May of 2003, was an All-SEC performer all four seasons with the Crimson Tide. She started in all but seven games during her career.

This wasn't the Prejean's first experience with

the U.S. national team. The 2000 SEC Freshman of the Year was invited to participate in the 2002 USA National Team Camp following her junior season.

PLAYING BEISBOL

There are few places where America's National Pasttime is held in higher regard than in Cuba, where no less than Fidel Castro has long been an afficionado of beisbol. And this summer Alabama right-handed pitcher Tommy Hunter got to see for himself as he was a member of the USA National Team that participated in the FISU World University Championships in Havana.

It was quite a baseball year for Hunter. As a freshman last spring he posted a 10-3 record and 3.30 earned run average in 20 games for the Crimson Tide. He was the winning pitcher in a 5-1 decision at Tennessee that clinched the SEC championship for Bama. He set UofA rookie records for innings pitched and wins en route to earning freshman All-America honors.

And this summer he earned his way onto the USA National Team. The team had an initial roster of 20 players. Hunter was among 14 on a "watch list" who were added. After tryouts, the squad was cut to 22, and Hunter was among them.

The squad played 30 games in July, including seven intrasquad and exhibition games, and had a 20-2-1 record in the contests, all on the road.

On the Fourth of July he made his pitching debut for Team USA against an all-star team from Chinese Taipei in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Pitching in relief of Vanderbilt's David Price, Hunter threw two perfect innings, striking out five of the six batters he faced, and USA scored in the ninth to give him the victory.

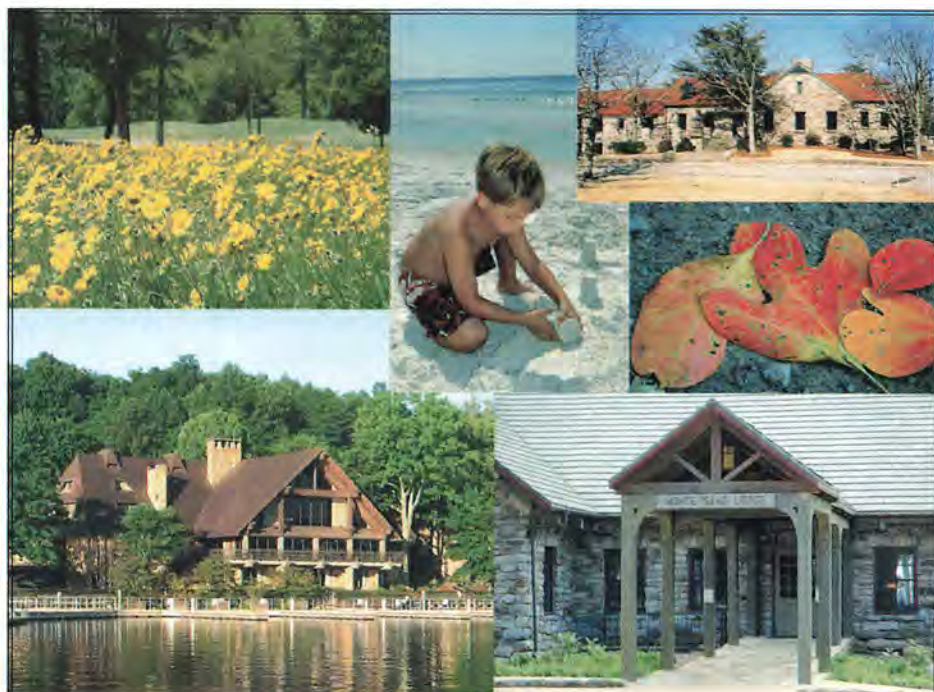
MVP

Alabama sophomore Kent Matthes of Orlando, Florida, was named the Winter Pines (Florida) Warthogs Most Valuable Player by the Florida Collegiate Summer League Board of Directors.

Matthes, who played outfield as a true freshman at Alabama last season, was the starting third baseman in 27 games for the Warthogs this summer. He batted .274 from the third spot in the batting order with seven home runs and 15 RBI. He also added 29 hits, including five doubles. In addition to his power numbers, Matthes was 8-for-8 in stolen bases and posted a .905 fielding mark at third base.

He also earned FCSL Player of the Week honors earlier this summer. During his award-winning week, Matthes batted .444 (4-for-9) with two home runs and three RBI.

Matthes appeared in 31 games for Alabama last season, including 14 starts. He batted .200 (11-for-55) with one home run and eight RBI.



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GAME-WINNER

Alabama soccer player Jessie Deegan scored the only goal and Crimson Tide teammate Kara Gudmens played a perfect second half in net as the duo led the Chantilly Inter Milan Soccer Club to a 1-0 win at the United States Youth Soccer National Championships in Des Moines, Iowa, this summer.

SOCCER ON TV

Alabama soccer's October 8 home game against Ole Miss will be televised regionally by Fox Sports Net South.

The game is part of five-game SEC soccer package to be run by the network.

"It's always nice to showcase your program as well as your facilities on television," Alabama Coach Don Staley said. "It's a great opportunity for our girls to gain some exposure and for our recruits and fans to get an insight into what the Alabama soccer experience is all about."

This will be the second time in three seasons that the Alabama vs. Ole Miss match-up has been picked up by FSN. In 2004 the Crimson Tide's Emily Pitek netted a penalty kick in overtime to lift Alabama to a 1-0 victory before a regional audience.

VOLLEYBALL TELEVISED

The Alabama Volleyball team's October 6 match against Southeastern Conference rival Arkansas will be televised by Fox Sports South.

"I am extremely pleased that Fox Sports South will air our match with Arkansas," Alabama head coach Judy Green said. "This has become one the best rivals in the SEC and traditionally when the two of us get together you can expect a great match."

Green, in her 11th season coaching the Crimson Tide, led Alabama to its best season ever in 2005, including a trip to the SEC Championship finals and its first ever trip to the NCAA Championships.

The match against Arkansas, which will get underway at 6 p.m. CST, comes early in the conference slate and will be the Tide's first home match in the month of October.

"Arkansas will be heavily favored to win the SEC Western Division and we will have to be prepared to play at a very high level in order win," Green said.

COACHING SUCCESS

Alabama Men's Tennis Coach Billy Pate coached the Southern Boys 18s sectional team to a national runner-up finish at the USTA National Team Championships played at the University of Illinois this summer.

Pate's squad entered the event, formerly known as the Junior Davis Cup, as the number two seed and rolled through the first three rounds. The team won 22 of its first 26 matches played before falling to top-seeded Southern California in the finals.

"We had a great run in the tournament and we really wanted to win the national team title," Pate said. "We had a tremendous team representing the Southern section. I was fortunate to have a great group of kids who fought hard and had chances against a Southern California team that was very tough."

Seventeen sectional teams competed in the Championships. The event followed a collegiate tennis format featuring three doubles matches followed by six singles matches. For many of the participants it was their first exposure to collegiate-style tennis before many will enter the college ranks this fall.

TAKING GOLD

Alabama All-America sprinter Tahesia Harrigan struck gold for her native British Virgin Islands at the recent Central American and Caribbean Games held in Cartagena, Colombia.

The sprinter, who just completed her senior season at Alabama, won the 100-meter dash with a dominating time of 11.15, just 1/100ths of a second off

the CAC Games record and nearly half a second ahead of the rest of the field.

Harrigan closed out her Alabama career with All-America honors in the 100-meter dash after taking fourth place.

FOOTBALL TALK ON THE WEB

"Inside The Crimson Tide," the radio show, hosted by longtime sports broadcaster Scott Moore and BAMA Editor Kirk McNair, is being added to stations around the South. The show, which airs 7-9 p.m. central time each Wednesday, originates from one of the nation's most powerful all-sports talk stations, 98.1 The Ticket from the Florida panhandle. It can also be heard on the internet at GreatAmericanRadio.com. Listeners may participate by calling 1-877-981-0981.

GAMEDAY

The University of Alabama's 2005 football game day program, edited by Associate Media Relations Director Becky Hopf and produced by Crimson Tide Sports Marketing, was recently honored as one of the nation's best for the second straight year by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA). The program, which earned a fourth-place finish by CoSIDA in 2004, earned another fourth-place finish in 2005.

Earlier this spring, two stories authored by Hopf for the 2004 football game program earned acclaim from CoSIDA. Hopf's cover story for the Southern Mississippi game ("The Brothers Britt", detailing the life of Tide football teammates and brothers Wesley, Taylor and Justin Britt) placed second in the nation and first in the district. Hopf's Arkansas game program cover story on strong safety Charlie Peprah ("Peprah is Pure Royalty When It Comes to Leaders") placed third in the district.

Since 1988, the Alabama's Athletics Media Relations Office has won 109 publication and writing awards from CoSIDA. ■

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Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,

Well, now, if I told you, it wouldn't be a surprise, would it? Who among us has not heard and/or uttered the phrase?

In the early days of football season, the personality of the team is emerging. That's more than just an evaluation of who is playing well or team success. It's the "how" and the "why" as much as the "who" and the "what."

And there are always surprises.

The question comes each year in some form. "Who are going to be the surprises on this team?" And what the question really begs is "Who are going to be the pleasant surprises?" because fans ordinarily don't want to speculate on the negative.

No one can know with certainty what to expect, but it's interesting to contemplate which Crimson Tide player (or players) might be that surprise.

Established starters may make surprising progress, but that's not the surprise we fans are wondering about. Nor are we going to be particularly surprised by most position moves. John Parker Wilson going to linebacker obviously would be a surprise, but that's not the kind of personnel change that is remotely likely. Most moves are reasoned, and even to be expected.

And speaking of Wilson, the heir apparent to Brodie Croyle at quarterback: it is not likely that anything he does will be a surprise. After all, he has been the back-up Crimson Tide quarterback, and so super-human qualities are expected. (For the same reason, many Bama followers would say "It didn't surprise me" if freshman Greg McElroy came in and won the starting quarterback job, but that would shock me.)

The big surprise almost has to come from a newcomer or from a returning player who has seen little or no action. And even some of them must be ruled out. If Andre Smith can come in and start on the offensive line, that would be unusual. But since in the minds of most Bama fans Smith has already been assigned a star level equal to that of former Bama great Chris Samuels, Andre Smith cannot be a big (pleasant) surprise.

But it could be a freshman. Wide receiver is a spot where freshmen can often play quickly. Alabama signed only one wide receiver, Mike McCoy, but there could be surprises from the likes of prep quarterback Earl Alexander, or former high school defensive backs Jake Jones or Javier Arenas. (Arenas probably cannot be considered a surprise if he proves to be an outstanding kick return man, because he has strong credentials.)

A quick confession: Prior to the 1974 season, I authored an outlook on Alabama football in which I stated without equivocation that "Wayne Wheeler cannot be replaced at split end." Wheeler was an excellent player, but obviously Ozzie Newsome was a surprise to me.

How about a man who played in all 12 games in 2005 and was in on 196 plays? If you can't remember one play he made, would that make him a candidate for "surprise" player of 2006 if he becomes a major contributor?

Rashad Johnson strikes me as surprise material. Johnson came to Alabama in 2004 from Sulligent, a walk-on running back. He was redshirted his first year, then played in every game last fall on kickoff and punt coverage teams. He made eight tackles, he caused a fumble against Auburn, but he never showed up on the radar at tailback. So in the spring he moved to safety. Jeffrey Dukes was not a surprise to have one of the safety positions. But if Johnson can make the move from walk-on running back to starting strong safety in his sophomore season, that would surprise a lot of people...even though there was a little hint in the spring when he won the "Bear Bryant Award" as the Tide's best non-scholarshipped performer and again just prior to the start of fall practice when it was announced by Coach Mike Shula that he (along with placekicker Jamie Christensen) had been elevated to scholarship status.

There are a number of players who might be the big surprise. If Alabama has a successful season, it is likely there will be several who are in the "pleasant surprise" category. ■

Sincerely,
Kirk McNair

'Bama

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